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Ambiguous Recognition: Recursion, Cognitive Blending, and the Problem of Interpretation in Twenty-First-Century Fiction

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Christopher David Kilgore entitled "Ambiguous Recognition: Recursion, Cognitive Blending, and the Problem of Interpretation in Twenty-First-Century Fiction." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Amy J. Elias, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Allen R. Dunn, Thomas W. Haddox, Stephen Blackwell

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Recursion, Cognitive Blending, and the Problem of Interpretation in Twenty-First-Century Fiction

A Dissertation Presented for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Christopher David Kilgore
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This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Courtney.

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Abstract

This dissertation uses theories of cognitive conceptual integration (as outlined by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner) to propose a model of narrative reading that mediates between narratology and theories of reception. I use this model to demonstrate how new experimental narratives achieve a potent balance between a determinate and open story-form. Where the high postmodernists of the 1970s and 80s created ironic, undecidable story-worlds, the novels considered here allow readers to embrace seemingly opposite propositions without retreating into ironic suspension, trading the postmodernist "neither/nor" for a new "both/and." This technique demands significant revision of both descriptions of radical experimentation in twenty-first-century novels, and of earlier narratological accounts of the distinction between story and discourse.

Each novel considered in this dissertation encourages its reader to recognize combined concepts in the course of the reading process. Shelley Jackson's *Half Life* combines singular and plural identity, reimagining individualist subjectivity and the literary treatment of (dis)ability. Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions* combines objective and subjective temporality, offering a new perspective on American myth-making in the popular post-Kerouac road-novel tradition. Percival Everett's *Erasure* combines reliable and unreliable narration to create a complex critique of the idea of an African American novel tradition. M.D. Coverley's hypertext novel *Califia* involves the reader in all three of these discursive dimensions at once, updating the marginalized art of hypertext fiction by inviting the reader to see his or her role in navigating the text as both creative and determined—the epitome of open-and-closed form.

My analysis demonstrates how cognitive blending is a precise method for describing how

a reader interprets complex narrative structures. I propose this blending-model as a new approach to contemporary experimental fiction from the perspective of the reader's cognitive work, and show how it offers new readings of important contemporary fiction. I argue that twenty-first-century authors attempt simultaneously to construct "open" forms, and to address real socio-cultural concerns in the world; I also argue that a narratology founded on theories of cognitive processes is best-equipped to describe the operations of reading and understanding these complex narrative forms.

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Preface

This dissertation examines five narrative texts that invite a reader to reconstruct multiple contradictory stories from their pages—Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Shelley Jackson's *Half Life*, Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions*, Percival Everett's *Erasure*, and M.D. Coverley's *Califia*. The dissertation advances a threefold hypothesis. First, it proposes that structuralist narratology's models of the "story/discourse" relationship are inadequate to describe certain kinds of experimental fiction, particularly texts that engage with the ironic perspectives and inclusive, pluralist politics of postmodernist narrative forms. Second, in order to describe and interpret such texts, it proposes an alternative model of narrative reading based on theories of cognitive conceptual integration, or "cognitive blending." I thus move from structuralist description of *form* to cognitive description of *reading process* in order to show, through careful analysis of four 21st-century novels, how readers are led to construct divergent and contradictory stories in each of these texts. In the case of these four novels, I argue that the contradictory stories differ in such precise, suggestive ways that they encourage the reader to try to integrate them, revising her sense of the "whole story" to accommodate all of the seemingly antinomical story-situations. Third, I propose that the final interpretation to which the reader is led as a result of this specific reading process maps onto specific political and ethical questions raised by studies in 21st-century culture, and that these texts generate their contradictions and integrations in order to guide their readers toward new ways of recognizing the varied dimensions of the narrating process: the narrator, the characters, the story-world, and the reader's own

involvement.

Chapter One defines "story" (what is told) and "discourse" (the telling) in the terms of structuralist narratology and then introduces the cognitive-blending model of reading used in the subsequent chapters. The chapter demonstrates the descriptive and explanatory power of cognitive blending by using it to elucidate a longstanding literary-critical controversy concerning how to interpret the story-world of Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire* (1962). I argue that this novel is difficult to describe in the terms of classical structuralist narratology in part because the reader—expecting to read a work of fiction—has to glean a sense of "story" from what appears to be a scholarly edition of an epic poem, and also in part because the text seems to allow readers to produce contradictory understandings of what happens. To better explain this story-level plurality, I use the theory of cognitive conceptual integration, or "blending" (proposed by Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier) to revise the structuralist distinction between story and discourse and the understanding of reader-text interaction from recent cognitive and rhetorical models. Using the proposed "blending-model of narrative reading," I show how the text encourages the reader to piece together its contradictory story-worlds, not only by producing different conclusions about "what happened," but also by creating different accounts of how the narrators narrate—of the act of narration. I conclude that *Pale Fire* seems to prevent readers from excluding alternate versions of the story: *neither* the contentious conclusion that one character wrote the whole document, *nor* the more prevalent conclusion that they remain distinct as narrators seems capable of excluding or subsuming the other version of the story. I therefore argue that interpretations of the novel's thematic, contextual, or ethical significance have to proceed on the basis of this "neither/nor" description.

In subsequent chapters, I apply the blending-model of narrative reading to texts that use similar juxtapositions—of multiple narrative genres, of graphics and text, or of different narrators—to achieve a similar plurality of possible stories. Unlike *Pale Fire*, however, they encourage the reader to see the "neither/nor" conclusion as inadequate and to seek ways to integrate the opposing stories. Because these stories seem conceptually opposed, by integrating them the reader also produces a combination of concepts such that the story world satisfies the requirements of *both* one concept *and* its contrary.

Chapter Two shows how Shelley Jackson's novel *Half Life* (2006) uses graphical elements and the juxtaposed narrative forms of memoir and diary to generate divergent possible stories. Here, the narrator is a member of a growing minority community of self-described "twofers"—two-headed people—in an alternate-historical version of the United States. The possible stories involve discrepancies over which of the heads committed which acts, and which head is the narrator of the discourse. In encouraging the reader to integrate these stories, the text also produces a conception of a "singular *and* plural self," and, I argue, seeks to revise contemporary discourses surrounding identity and (dis)ability along lines developed in theoretical terms by Judith Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself*.

Chapter Three turns to the matter of temporality in Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *Only Revolutions* (2006), which uses an innovative page-layout to juxtapose narratives by two different narrators with a non-narrative string of dated events printed in the margins of each. The text prompts the reader to create potential stories that see the two teenage narrators taking a possibly escapist road trip together, or taking different road trips in different centuries. As in *Half Life*, these stories encourage the reader to integrate two different and seemingly

unassimilable possible stories, producing a conception of a simultaneous "subjective *and* objective time." I argue that the novel uses this concept to challenge notions of progressive history and individual self-determination prevalent in U.S.-American culture, and in the road-novel genre in particular.

Chapter Four illustrates how an autodigetic narrator's "reliability" results from story-world conclusions about his narrative agency, i.e., his ability to turn his experiences into a text that can do what he wants it to do. Percival Everett's novel *Erasure* (2001) juxtaposes a fragmentary memoir with other narrative and non-narrative fragments to prompt for stories that differ over how much control the narrator exercises over his text. By encouraging the reader to integrate these stories, the text also requires that she recognize a narrator "in control of *and* controlled by" his text. I argue that *Erasure* uses this unusual story-world to attempt to rebuild a conception of an African American novel tradition that can avoid reiterating racializing conceptions of social difference.

Chapter Five uses the cumulative insights of each of the preceding chapters to consider the role of the addressee in the story-world of M.D. Coverley's hypertext novel *Califia* (2000). Including this hypertext fiction in my overall discussion is important, for while criticism often cordons off digital literature for separate analysis, I establish its surprising similarity to the more traditional print novels in other chapters. Here, the divergent stories present an ongoing quest in which the reader is supposed to participate—or a straightforward story about a quest, wherein the narrators' and readers' efforts alike turn out to be futile. In blending these stories the reader produces a conception of the addressee as "*both* capable *and* incapable" of affecting the story's outcome. I argue that this hypertext novel attempts to revise the discourse of interactivity and

participation permeating theories of digital literature and in the manner of Danielewski's novel encourages the reader to accept the precepts of a revisionist historiography.

As the chapters ahead will demonstrate, each of these novels uses its "both/and" logic to advance a process-based understanding of self and world. They attempt to satisfy simultaneously critical demands that seem opposed: demands for a theory or folk psychology adequate to the growing consensus that selves are plural and socially-produced, and demands for ethical adequacy, a "self" concept that allows for individual responsibility and accountability. This dissertation's analyses therefore not only constitute a formal description, but also begin to suggest how the cognitive activity that these novels provoke can afford distinctive interpretive conclusions in thematic or contextual analyses.

In offering a blending-model of narrative reading, and by using it to describe and interpret difficult texts, this dissertation stands to benefit the fields of narratology, cognitive studies of literature, and practical interpretation. For narratology, the present model redefines the hegemonic static model of story and discourse, providing a dynamic account of the interaction between reader and text—in short, a way of creating precise descriptions of how a text encourages readerly activity with a specifiable cognitive form. The present model also modifies rhetorical and cognitive theories of reading by providing a way to understand how readers integrate disparate kinds of text, the accounts of different narrators, or different narrative or seemingly non-narrative elements to recognize story-level objects, characters, and events. Furthermore, unlike most previous models, it emphasizes that the act of narration itself is part of the story-form that a reader recognizes in a text by "reading it as narrative."

For cognitive studies of literature, the present study provides a new perspective on how

the theory of cognitive blending might venture beyond analyses of metaphor, contextual allusion, genre, or focalization. It also distinguishes between several kinds of blending activity, emphasizing that this cognitive process's ubiquity does not necessarily make it too broad a descriptive system.

Finally, for the endeavor of practical interpretation, the present study provides a way to venture beyond the common conclusion that experimental texts simply break with tradition or produce paradoxes—that they "problematize" or "abandon" narrative form. By providing the means to describe the cognitive form of the reading process prompted by a difficult text, the blending-model of narrative reading allows for more nuanced interpretations of the text's thematic, socio-historical, or ethical import.

I. Discourse, Story, and Cognitive Blending in *Pale Fire*

This dissertation argues that certain narrative texts juxtapose formal cues to interrupt the reader's interpretive flow of story-world construction, generating a limited indeterminacy that does not completely destabilize the story-world, but also does not allow it to feel fixed and complete. This indeterminacy produces slight variations in the possible stories that a reader might reconstruct from the discourse level of the narrative, variations of a kind that exert pressure on the reader to combine the possible stories. This combination can then allow the reader to accept simultaneously two or more antinomical story-situations.

The argument grounds itself in narratology, specifically the process by which a reader turns a physical text into a mental conception of a story-world—namely the relationship between story (the properly mimetic sense of what happens) and discourse (the representation of what happens in a specific medium). The present chapter argues that texts such as Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, which relies upon a juxtaposition of (at least) two different discourses by two different narrators, trouble the story-discourse relationship, making it impossible to argue that the discourse simply "states" or "means" the story. *Pale Fire* requires a theory of narrative reading that can take into account the reader's activity in constructing story from discourse, a development begun in phenomenology and continued in contemporary cognitive linguistics. This chapter will therefore also argue that the cognitive linguistic theory of "conceptual blending" can describe with more precision than conventional narratological terms what happens when discourse prompts for story construction at multiple levels.

Pale Fire became instantly famous for its challenging formal qualities, and for the

predicament in which they place the reader. It comprises an epic poem by someone named John Shade, surrounded and interpenetrated by a vast and colorful commentary by someone who calls himself Charles Kinbote. The latter provides a foreword; a network of footnotes to Shade's lines that both comment on individual lines and refer to distant parts of the poem and to other footnotes; and finally an idiosyncratic index. Quite early in the foreword, the reader faces a profound problem about how to read this text, in two different senses. The first problem is one of navigation: after the foreward, she can either read straight through poem and footnotes in order, or hop back and forth between them. Either approach eventually produces the second problem, one of interpretation and evaluation. Kinbote's foreword suggests that he is not the best editor for Shade's poem, and his footnotes show signs of obsessive intrusion on Shade's life, and ultimately elaborate fantasies or delusions. Kinbote's activities may therefore be insidious invasions of Shade's privacy and intellectual legacy, but they may also be a more complex act of desperate self-validation by a cultural outsider to Shade's seemingly placid New Wye.

Not only, then, does *Pale Fire* juxtapose a fictional text and a fictional paratext; it also presents these texts as the outcome or textual artifact of prior activity and experience, namely Shade's life and composition of the poem, and Kinbote's appropriation of that poem and composition of its commentary. One central question concerns how to understand the relationship between these texts and men, and this question hinges on how the reader understands *their* understanding of the world in which they live. Thanks to its two signal characteristics—the juxtaposition of textual forms and the self-referential fiction of a textual history—*Pale Fire* has also always caused considerable disagreement over precisely these relationships between Kinbote, Shade, their environs, and their texts. In response, some readers

tread with caution, disavowing coherent conclusions entirely, while others go so far as to assert that Shade or Kinbote wrote poem and commentary alike, making each a sly reflection of Nabokov himself, a mastermind behind a curtain of text.

This chapter's first task is to explain how narratology handles works such as *Pale Fire*, where the text does not at first appear to be narrative at all, but where empirical readers everywhere treat it as if it were. This task will require a brief account of story and discourse as they appeared in literary criticism, as outgrowths of earlier studies in structuralist linguistics. The division has its origin in Tomashevsky's distinction between *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, a distinction familiar from its subsequent adoption by Vladimir Propp. For these and other Russian Formalists, *fabula* consists of a set stock of literary motifs and themes, which authors adapt and connect in order to tell a meaningful story—creating a specific arrangement Tomashevsky calls *sjuzhet*. The implied division between a story's content (what Prince calls the "told") and its expression or organization (what Prince calls the "telling") reappears over and over again in theories of narrative, as "story and discourse," and sometimes also as "plot" (opposed, e.g., to "story" by Forster) or "text."[1] As scholars attempted to apply such a division to nontraditional literary texts—a diverse group of formally ambitious narrative forms, using a plurality of media—they found it necessary to modify the formalist terms and parameters. The present chapter takes up this history at the point when structuralist critics such as Seymour Chatman and Gérard Genette begin to adapt the formalist method to a trans-media theory of narrative (Chatman) and a more precise theory of how linguistic marks achieve narrative effects (Genette), and traces it through its transformations in Wolfgang Iser's phenomenological approach and the

[1] John Pier provides a detailed summary of the terms' evolution (see Pier, "Semiotic"), as does Pekka Tammi in his exploration of narrative form in Nabokov's novels (*Problems* 64).

cognitive approaches of Paul Ricoeur and Monika Fludernik.

The second task here will be to outline the contemporary cognitive linguistic theory of conceptual blending, the next step in the exploration of a theory of narrative applicable to *Pale Fire*. The third and final task will be to demonstrate the utility of this blending-based account of story and discourse in describing and explaining the longstanding dispute over story-level narrative control in Nabokov's novel.

From Structuralism to Phenomenology

Seymour Chatman's seminal *Story and Discourse* argues that these two dimensions of narrative constitute a communication from an implied author to an implied reader. He follows Jean Piaget and structuralist semioticians in asserting a tripartite distinction between the "substance" or "material manifestation" of the communication (23), the form of the expression (the discourse), and the content expressed (the story). He holds all media more or less equal in the ability to constitute discourse and express story, and therefore his analysis tends (like the title of his book) to collapse matters of "material manifestation" into discourse. Much like those of prior (Tomashevsky, Propp) and later structuralists (Prince, Kafalenos), his approach treats story (i.e., content) as a set of propositions[2] about existents (characters, objects) and events (actions, happenings) such that, given the right context, when the reader encounters a statement such as "There is a very loud amusement park right in front of my present lodgings" (*PF* 9), a number of story elements become available. They include propositions such as "the narrator is a character

[2] Russian formalists would differ with Chatman and divide such propositions between their categories, assigning large-scale generalizations to *fabula* and propositions specific to a given narrative to *sjuzhet* (see Pier, "Semiotic" 76).

in his own story," "he writes at some definite location," "he writes (or at least spatially *is*) near an amusement park," and very likely, "he finds the park irritating." The sum total of these possible propositions together constitutes the story-meaning of the discourse passage.[3] As Chatman puts it, the "discourse is said to 'state' the story" (31). Story comes into being with a structure; it is the "story-as-discoursed," with story elements selected and presented in a manner chosen by the narrator (and orchestrated by an implied author). When the author has the narrator above choose not to *say* that the park irritates him, he has him make a selection, an aspect of discourse that Chatman finds indispensable (28). This selection-process can make story seem epistemically prior to discourse, as when Chatman says that discourse can "choose which events and objects actually to state and which to imply" (28), but his own use of the terms makes this priority problematic.

In fact, the precise relationship between discourse and story seems to oscillate in the course of Chatman's description. At his simplest, he says that "the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*" (19), and that "the process by which a narrative event is expressed is its 'transformation'" (21) from a preexisting non-linguistic state to a linguistic expression as discourse. For Chatman, the same story can find itself expressed in any medium, be it text, film, ballet, or drama: "Narrative translation from one medium to another is possible because roughly the same set of events and existents can be read out" (42). In working through this process of "reading out," however, Chatman makes several surprising statements, each of which renders story more distinct from discourse, but also shifts the sense of their

[3] This theory therefore produces a definition of "narrative" based on the kinds of propositions a text makes available. For Chatman, these must include existents (characters, objects), events (actions, happenings), and a temporal/causal ordering that relates them to one another (a plot). I will defer for now an explicit discussion of a definition of "narrative."

priority. He says that story "exists only at an abstract level; any manifestation already entails the selection and arrangement performed by the discourse as actualized by a given medium" (37). The propositional statements above, including "he finds the park irritating," cannot state "story" directly; they merely translate it into discourse. Story itself seems then to consist not of a literal collection of propositions, but rather an abstract collection of *possible* propositions, most not actually articulated by the reader. Chatman therefore carefully navigates around an objection:

> Though this chapter has treated story as an object, I do not mean to suggest that it is a hypostatized object, separate from the process by which it emerges in the consciousness of a 'reader' [. . .]. From the surface or manifestation level of reading, one works through to the deeper narrative level. That is the process I call, technically, *reading out*. (41, italics in original)

Chatman does not seem comfortable with asserting that everything meaningful about narrative resides within and is a direct communicative product of discourse alone. In this passage he almost equates story itself with the process of "reading out" instead of the product of such a process (let alone the anterior cause of discursive transformation). As he considers the objection that not all readers will think they have read "the same" story, Chatman shifts from a kind of priority that construes story as a preexisting set of propositions in the text, to a phenomenological priority that sees it as the result of a process happening in the reader's mind. As a result, discourse seems to exist first, to be "transformed" by the reading mind into story.

In the case of the Nabokov example above, perhaps the most vital story-level detail—the speaker's irritation—remains unstated. All that the discourse says is that the amusement park exists, and specifies a location. But reading habits, including familiarity with diction and tonal

variation, suggest that the phrases "very loud" and "right in front" originate in an irritated narrator,[4] and call attention particularly to his susceptibility to distraction by noise, and therefore his dubious qualifications (this process is also what makes it funny). All of this follows from Chatman's theory, but the inferences build upon discourse to produce story, rather than the other way around. In spite of Chatman's insistence that discourse selects from a preexisting story, the process of reading-out works in the opposite direction, from a textual discourse that encourages the reader to construct the story. The sense of story's epistemic "preexistence" (in the mind of a narrator, for instance, or in a world) is part of story itself.

Chatman himself might object that his communications model stipulates that the story must come first, since the author presumably had some story-level material in mind, and produced the discourse to communicate it, but for the purposes of practical interpretation his model undermines this claim by placing the author beyond the reader's reach. For Chatman, the reader produces the implied author (as well as an implied reader) from the discourse in much the same manner as the story: the implied author is "reconstructed by the reader from the narrative" (150), though ostensibly at an even deeper "level" than the basic story-level events and existents. Chatman cannot escape this theoretical move either, since his explanation of "unreliable" narrators depends upon a distinction between what the narrator says, and what the implied author seems to mean. In the implied temporality of empirical writing, story comes first; in the practical temporality of reading a text, discourse comes first.[5]

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[4] See also Oakley (488) for a similar use of this line. The present project cites the Everyman's Library edition of *Pale Fire*. For the sake of simplicity, references to John Shade's poem appear in quotations ("PF") and cite by line number; references to Kinbote's commentary appear in italics (*PF*), and cite by page.

[5] Richard Walsh comes to this conclusion from a different direction (see Walsh 65). Chatman's use of the "implied author" draws, of course, upon Wayne Booth's similar formulation. For more on Booth, see Iser (103), and particularly Hale (188) on the ethical dimensions of his implied-author concept.

In fact, time itself remains the primary weakness in Chatman's approach. Although he takes pains to make story seem like process rather than product, he also retains the structuralist assumption that a narrative, once read, freezes into a shape amenable to a diagram—or perhaps, as both Prince and Kafalenos suggest, an algebraic equation of logical propositions.[6] The careful reader should therefore always start a narrative analysis from a standpoint at the end of the reading process, rather than (as I have done here with *PF*) at the beginning. In the case of the present example, a much later comment by the same narrator undermines the statement about the amusement park: "At first I was greatly bothered by the blare of diabolical radio music from what I thought was some kind of amusement park across the road—it turned out to be camping tourists [. . .]" (*PF* 180). Under Chatman's model it seems beholden upon the reader, in the face of this new situation, to revise the overall conception of the story elements. The initial quotation ceases to present the park as an actual story element, and now presents the narrator as somebody mistaken about what he hears. This reduction seems accurate, but at the same time it bears poor witness to the initial story-construction that has the reader imagining a very real amusement park (perhaps replete with Ferris wheel and cotton candy)—and to the revision process by which the reader replaces it with noisy campers.

A process-oriented, dynamic approach is precisely what subsequent narrative theorists have sought to elucidate, beginning more or less at the same time that Chatman wrote *Story and Discourse*. Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* embraces most of Chatman's assertions about the form and function of narrative, using for Chatman's "story" and "discourse" the terms "story" and "narrative" (Genette 27), and maintaining Chatman's intuition about the priority of story: discourse is "a transcription of the (supposed) non-verbal into the verbal" (165). To this

[6] See Prince (*Narratology* 86-7); Kafalenos (7).

model Genette adds, however, a third category distinct from story and discourse, namely the act of discourse-production (what he calls the "narrating"), and therefore he also distinguishes between the "pseudotime" that constitutes the story-level chronology, and the "time needed for *crossing* or *traversing*" the written text (34, Genette's italics). These separate categories allow him to speak about the "time of the narrating," or in the present example, the fact that Charles Kinbote's temporal deictics (words in the preterite and other indices of time past) clearly mark his statements about the poem and its composition as prior to his narration—and at the same time he marks his statements about his situation as he writes with the present-tense. This "time of the narrating" remains ambiguous insofar as it seems to belong to both narrator and reader simultaneously. Genette uses it to account for a sense of speed, "the relationship between a duration" in story "and a length" in discourse (88), and thus far it seems to belong to the spatialized world of the narrator's discourse; but as phrased above, the "time needed for crossing" surely belongs to the reader, whose eye follows the narrator's text. Because, as he later clarifies, Genette's study mostly avoids matters of story and reception to focus on discourse as text (*Narrative Discourse Revisited* 135), he does not use the distinction between pseudotime (story time) and traversal time to account for the kind of shifting readerly understanding necessary for a self-reflexive work such as *Pale Fire*.

Neither of these accounts, in fact, seems to handle Nabokov's famous work particularly well—which should not be surprising, given that he was rather well-acquainted with how Russian formalists tended to analyze texts. Setting aside, for the moment, its apparently nonnarrative forms (Shade's poem and Kinbote's foreword and commentary), the novel's plural textuality makes a clear structuralist account of the story difficult. Insofar as "discourse"

remains tethered to a narrator's selection-activity, Chatman or Genette could argue that the book has two discourses, one (the poem) "narrated" by Shade and one (the commentary) by Kinbote, and that they generate two separate stories. Both narrators do seem to refer to some of the same story-level existents and events, however. Shade's autobiographical poem introduces his wife Sybil, his daughter Hazel, and the bucolic New Wye environment. He also tells of Hazel's apparent suicide, his creative process in writing poems, and his happy relationship with Sybil. Kinbote's narrative shares all of these existents and events, but adds to them an account of his friendship with Shade, of Sybil as an interfering harridan, and also a rather fantastical tale of the escape of King Charles II from his native Zembla (where he had a wife and a series of male lovers), and an equally fantastical tale of an assassin, Gradus, who tries to kill the King in hiding but shoots Shade by mistake.

With a model akin to Chatman's, it is possible to argue that there is only one "discourse" and it really tells only one "story," but many of the conclusions that *Pale Fire* affords do not stem directly from statements in either discourse. Rather, the twinned tales share enough existents and events for a reader to suspect that they address the same story-level world, but differ enough that they do not collapse into two discourses that literally "tell" the same story.[7] Instead, the best that can be said is that the two discourses, and their juxtaposition in Nabokov's novel, seem to imply a "story-world" to which both of the autodiegetic narrators have access.[8] This story-world includes conclusions that arise from, for instance, the fact that Kinbote regards

[7] This is what Pier argues (see "Text" para 11), but he seems inclined to follow Thomas Pavel and other "possible worlds" theorists in referring interchangeably to the notion of "the story" and that of "the story-world."

[8] Some semiotic theories of narrative divide "story" into a specific series of actions (Schmid's "Geschichte," Bremond's "racontants") and a more general set of existents akin to a "story-world" (Schmid's "Geschehen," Bremond's "raconté"), but this division has older roots in the distinction between "story" and "plot" as proposed by E.M. Forster; for further discussion see Pier ("Semiotic" 81-5). In my account "story-world" includes events as well as existents, as clarified further below.

himself as Shade's close confidante (see *PF* 10), "my friend" (*PF* 57, the very first note to the text), whereas Shade's poem never seems to mention Kinbote. Given their view of the close relationship between story and discourse, Chatman or Genette might suggest that this "story" is not part of the "reading out" at all, but rather a higher-level interpretive conclusion[9]—but this seems unsatisfying, particularly since Kinbote's account makes his own accuracy such an important part of his narrative's story-world, effectively asking the reader to look at the poem and (dis)confirm his judgments (see e.g. *PF* 11). The "story-world" the narrators share is a distinct story-level, constructed from the agreements and disagreements between the two accounts—and subject to revision. It shifts and changes as the reader traverses *Pale Fire*, but as the book's reception-history suggests, it keeps on wriggling after the first, second, or indeed any subsequent reading. The nature of these intertwined discourses[10] seems to require a dynamic narrative model, one that can more easily account for the gaps in and between the discourses, *and* for the reader's activity in filling those gaps.

At the same time as the publication of *Story and Discourse* and *Narrative Discourse* (both issued less than a decade after *Pale Fire*), Wolfgang Iser creates precisely this kind of dynamic description of narrative. His *The Implied Reader* takes a phenomenological rather than structuralist approach to narrative, inspired (like Jauss and others of the Konstanz school) by the philosophical work of Roman Ingarden. For Iser, all literary works are "virtual" in precisely the way that *PF* seems to be. They are composed not of substance and form alone (as Chatman

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[9] Both Chatman and Genette pave the way for James Phelan's distinction between three components of narrative interpretation: a "mimetic component" that will "involve an audience's interest in the characters as possible people and in the narrative world as [. . .] hypothetically or conceptually possible"; a "thematic component" that will "involve an interest in the ideational function of the characters and in the [relevant] cultural, ideological, philosophical, or ethical issues"; and finally a "synthetic component" that will approach narrative elements "as artificial constructs" (*Experiencing* 6).

[10] Pier calls them "mutual paratexts" ("Between" para 4).

suggests), but are instead "the coming together of text and imagination" (279). He takes the time-distinction posited by Genette a step further, arguing that the time of traverse, the reader's time, is also the time of story-construction: "the process of [the implied reader's] anticipation and retrospection [. . .] leads to the formation of the virtual dimension" and it happens in "continual modification" and is thus "closely akin to the way in which we gather experience in life" (281). Iser argues that the "reading process is selective, and the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations" (280). Rather than conceiving of discourse as having already selected from a preexisting story, Iser sees the reader as selecting from a discourse to constitute story.[11] Iser therefore foregrounds what Roland Barthes has called the "proairetic" activity[12] that all readers carry out, picking and choosing among discourse elements to construct story. The discourse's contents constrain this activity, but can never by themselves be said to "state" the story. That is to say, there is no one-to-one correspondence between discourse elements and story elements.[13] Gaps always remain for the reader to fill.

Iser's approach clarifies some of what happens to *Pale Fire*'s reader. To read-out the story from each discourse, the reader already begins a selection-process, filling in Shade's idiosyncratic proclivities as a poet and Kinbote's unreliability. By the time Kinbote says, in his foreword, "And perhaps, let me add in all modesty, [Shade] intended to ask my advice after reading his poem to me as I know he planned to do" (11), the reader already knows enough to suspect that exactly the opposite is true: Kinbote is not at all modest, and Shade probably saw no

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[11] For the sake of continuity and brevity the technical terms are Chatman's, not Iser's; Iser uses for "story" Ingarden's "intentional sentence correlatives" as they combine to create "the world presented in the work" (277). He seems to oppose both Pavel's and Chatman's (very different) conceptions of story as prior to discourse. For an argument similar to Iser's, see also Walsh (56-7).

[12] See Barthes's "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" (102).

[13] See Pier's discussion of Todorov and Eco ("Semiotic" 81, 91), paralleled in Jens Eder's defense of cognitive approaches to narrative (289). Tammi also suggests the inappropriateness of a wholly "grammatical description" of narration in his study of Nabokov's poetics (*Problems* 62).

reason to ask his opinion. The amusement park example generates the expectation of more irascible outbursts, which the text provides (see e.g. *PF* 10), but its undoing in the later footnote forces the reader to go back and recast the initial details retrospectively as mistakes. By the (traversal) time of that footnote (to Shade's lines 609-614), the reader has come to expect Kinbote's tendency to jump to conclusions, and to fail to investigate fully. Indeed, the reader quickly learns to double check everything Kinbote says against the "configurative meaning" (in Iser's terms) of the entire story-world. Iser would suggest, then, that the virtual dimension of *PF* changes drastically during the course of one reading—that it has a temporal shape that might force a structuralist to draw a series of discourse/story diagrams to track the shifting relationships among existents and events. Because the reader learns in the course of the traverse to distrust Kinbote, she prepares herself to react when Kinbote eventually claims that he *is* the exiled King Charles II of Zembla, and not a humble academic.

This claim occurs not long after the amusement park's ontological undoing, and forces a rather dramatic shift in the selection-process by which the reader has assembled the story. Kinbote footnotes a reference to "John Shade's heart attack" but then quickly shifts to the story of King Charles Xavier's "arrival in America where he descended by parachute from a chartered plane" (*PF* 188). As has been his practice, Kinbote refers to the king in the third person, as "he." In a classic Kinbote-ism, the scholarly footnoter then adds: "Fain would I elucidate this business of parachuting but [. . .] this is not strictly necessary in these notes to *Pale Fire*" (189). The first-person pronoun has thus far served also as a story-world deictic, distinguishing Kinbote the scholar from Shade the poet ("he") and Charles the King (another "he"). Shortly thereafter, however, the first-person pronoun surfaces again: while a chauffeur "was doing his best to cram

the bulky and ill-folded parachute into the boot, I relaxed on a shooting stick he had supplied me with, sipping a delightful Scotch and water from the car bar" (189). This slip goes unremarked, but in subsequent footnotes, references to Charles will be in the first person. The shift in deixis forces the reader to look back at the entire novel, smashing together Kinbote's story of himself as a New Wye academic and his story of the king's Zemblan exploits—to produce an "unreliable" narrator who has gone from simply self-aggrandizing to either deceptive or delusional.

A useful distinction emerges here. Insofar as what the reader reads results from Kinbote's activities in the story-world, Kinbote and the king were always the same person in much the way that Chatman or Genette might describe them. But this textual history, this story about Kinbote sitting down and writing in "Cedarn, Utana," is *part of* the story-world—and is thus equally the reader's construction. In terms of the reader's experience of the textual artifact that is *Pale Fire* (i.e., in Iser's phenomenological sense), the two characters were separate, but now are identical (and perhaps identically fictional, ceding story-level reality to Vseslav Botkin—but more on this later). This is the sprouting, so to speak, of the seed that Genette plants with his distinction between traversal time and "pseudotime." In the traversal time, the two stories start out distinct from one another, in that the deictics that Kinbote uses prompt the reader to select out the parts that refer to Kinbote and the parts that refer to King Charles (and probably, to arrange the latter as the fictional creation of the former), and construe the King Charles part as a heterodiegetic account. When the deictic pronouns reveal Kinbote's "secret" (188-9), they prompt the reader to rearrange her sense of the story-levels (and probably laugh out loud). In traversal-time, then, the reader at first construes the two stories (of Charles Kinbote and King Charles II) as distinct, and then, later, construes them as the same. In "pseudotime,"

which is properly story-time, the two characters were always identical, and the reader at some point realizes their identity.[14] The distinction between *stories construed* as identical and *characters realized* as identical remains extremely difficult to maintain under Chatman's or Genette's theories, but Iser's phenomenological approach makes it almost natural.

Iser does not, however, distinguish as clearly between aspects of the reading process that concern only story-level elements—Chatman's "reading out"—and those that reach beyond story altogether, into higher levels of interpretation. It is a difficult and delicate distinction; subsequent theories of fictional narrative have either continued Iser's compression, treating narrative as a single authorial gesture (as in Walsh's rhetorical approach), or have driven an ever deeper wedge between the ontological realms of text and story-world (as in Thomas Pavel's possible worlds approach).

The Cognitive Approach

A third theoretical approach attempts to forge a path between rhetorical analysis and ontology, maintaining the complex fourfold distinction between discourse, story, and the temporalities at work in both by treating narrative as a conceptual system, amenable to description by contemporary cognitive linguistics. Chatman and Genette have outlined the terrain of story and discourse; Iser has provided a model of the reader's role in constructing story from discourse; and now Paul Ricoeur and Monika Fludernik suggest that the reader carries out that construction by applying a cognitive frame for "narrativity" to texts being "read as"

[14] This is why Pier concludes that the story told by Shade and that told by Kinbote "do not form two distinct levels" ("Between" para 11).

narrative.[15] Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* articulates this approach in terms of mimesis, suggesting that readers parse narrative discourse (his "mimesis$_2$") by recourse to frames of reference derived from their competence at understanding lived experience (his "mimesis$_1$"). His detailed three-volume account is, however, more concerned with how narrative allows human beings to cope with the aporias of time itself, a subject to which this dissertation will return in Chapter 3. For the present purpose, his most useful insight is that readers use a distinct conceptual framework to cope with narrative, an insight taken up and amplified by Monika Fludernik in *Toward a "Natural" Narratology*. She returns to the interpretive problems with which Iser wrestled, and indeed her book covers the same literary-historical terrain as his, working forward from very early English narrative to Beckett. Instead of studying narrative as an object, she follows Ricoeur's suggestion and studies "narrativization," or, "the reading of texts *as narrative*, as constituting narrativity in the reading process" (Fludernik 20). For her, story is a consequence of the reader's engagement with discourse; the story-level now resides entirely within the reader's cognitive apparatus (221). She also shifts the theoretical focus from phenomenology (Iser) or mimesis (Ricoeur) to the cognitive approach of William Labov. She defines the practice of "reading-narratively" as a set of "*cognitive frames* by means of which texts are interpreted" (12, her italics)—specifically, frames founded in the everyday recounting of lived experience.[16] She therefore carries Iser's discussion to one logical conclusion: a text need not be "formally" narrative to be treated as narrative discourse and used to generate story.

Fludernik can therefore explain more clearly the clash among the various genre cues *Pale*

[15] Other cognitive approaches to narrative focus on its evolutionary advantages (Boyd, Zunshine) or on how it becomes useful as a "tool for thinking," as David Herman puts it (303). Eder also provides a useful summary of the cognitive formalism proposed by Manfred Jahn and its application to film by Bordwell and Brannigan.
[16] For the detailed version of these frames see Fludernik's discussion of narrative levels (43-50).

Fire provides. A reader can approach *PF* as though it were simply poem and commentary, but would quickly judge the former as clever but not groundbreaking,[17] and the latter as scandalously inappropriate by most scholarly standards. The frames for poem-and-commentary, then, might be well-employed upon a critical edition of any major poet, but *PF*, although not clearly narrative in form (particularly in Genette's terms), calls both paratextually (it comes packaged as "a novel") and textually (in its textual details) upon the cognitive frames that a reader would use to read narrative. [18] It encourages the reader to construct from its text a number of physical existents that include not only the characters (Shade, Kinbote, Sybil, Hazel, Charles Xavier) and the settings (the locales of New Wye and Zembla) but also a manuscript of the poem "Pale Fire," and a conception of the novel *Pale Fire* as the published, annotated version of the poem. This process of construction also requires the reader to relate these existents to one another in terms of influence, action, and causality.[19]

Fludernik therefore elaborates Iser's dynamic description of narrative reading, but also tries to specify the kind of readerly activity involved in "reading narratively," as distinct from other kinds of interpretive activity such as thematic association, symptomatic contextual analysis, and so forth. She reorganizes Iser's "anticipations" and "retrospections" into cognitive frameworks that the reader uses to select from the discourse those elements that best help compose what she calls "mediated experientiality." Fludernik's cognitive perspective, then, offers a look "under the hood" of narratology's traditional machinery, of both the earlier

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[17] See for example Meyer (133) and Wood (193).
[18] Genette confines narrative to printed prose, disallowing poetry, drama, and probably also footnotes (34). I call the appellation "a novel" a paratext, but Richardson would call it either an authorial or institutional "antetext," depending on whether or not it was Nabokov's intention that it should appear on the cover (see "A Theory" 118-21).
[19] Fludernik does not see "events" as necessary to narrative, but most scholars would disagree. See for example Chatman's Chapter Two; Kafalenos (7); Ryan (7).

structuralist and also the more recent "rhetorical" variety.[20] The rhetorical approach favored by Richard Walsh's study of fictionality and James Phelan's work on narrative does, however, share Fludernik's emphasis on reception[21] and the feedback loop between the reader's expectations (i.e., cognitive frames) and the discourse information being read (Phelan, *Rhetoric* 4). The cognitive approach further clarifies that discourse cannot simply "relate" or "state" story-world people; rather, it contains linguistic cues that prompt activity: the reader fits deictic personal pronouns, verb tenses, and other grammatical structures into the same cognitive frameworks or "schemas" that she would use to make sense of human action in the extra-textual world. The same holds true for narrators: insofar as the text contains cues that call attention to what Genette would call the "narration," the situation in which the narrator narrates, it also prompts the reader to activate some of the same schemas for human action that she would apply to characters. Both Walsh and Fludernik follow Genette and others in pointing out that a text does not have to create the narrator as character, and a careful writer can compose linguistic elements in such a way as to avoid activating too many character-oriented cognitive elements.[22]

In sum, for many texts the traditional narratological terms remain effective for describing the relationship between discourse and story that constitutes narrative. The cognitive perspective becomes increasingly useful when traditional terms seem too vague, or seem to distort the reading experience. Such is the case with *Pale Fire*, whose complicated story-level can now be sketched more clearly.

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[20] Some of Manfred Jahn's and David Herman's work on cognitive theories of narrative actually precedes Fludernik's, but hers is among the most comprehensive attempts to re-ground narratology.

[21] See Phelan's introduction to *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* (7), and then particularly his chapter on mimesis (38-51), and on "The Narrator and the Frame of Fiction" (69-85).

[22] See Fludernik on figuralization (43-50), also Genette on diegetic level (*Narrative Discourse* 228), and the case of "zero degree" or extra/heterodiegetic narration as mimetic illusion (*Narrative Discourse Revisited* 46).

Pale Fire uses discourse elements like the personal pronoun deictics noted above, along with shifts in temporal deixis (tense and aspect), to prompt the reader to treat it narratively, and the reader therefore sets about selecting narrative elements to reconstruct the distinct story-levels:

a.) John Shade's account of the life of John Shade (JS on JS henceforth, i.e., "Pale Fire" the poem, in its dual paratextual relationship with K on K)

b.) Kinbote's account of the life of John Shade (K on JS, embedded in K on K), including Shade's composition of "PF"

c.) Kinbote's account of his own life (K on K), including his efforts at textual exegesis

d.) Kinbote's account of the life of Charles Xavier II, King of Zembla (K on CX, embedded in K on K)

e.) Kinbote's account of the final actions of Jakob Gradus, alias John Gray (K on G, embedded in K on K).[23]

Shared story-level elements begin to prompt the reader to start figuring out how to read-out the "virtual" story of Shade and Kinbote from their separate discourses and divergent stories, applying the cognitive story-frames to create a shared story-world. From JS on JS and K on JS, the reader learns to read out the "true story" of John Shade, which concerns Shade, his family, and his poetry. The reader learns here of the agony of John and Sybil as they watch Hazel's trouble with living (in both the JS and K accounts)—her inability to socialize well with other children (primarily JS), and her susceptibility to what seem to be supernatural influences (primarily K). The reader sees also the couple's redoubled agony as they realize that Hazel's

[23] Not everyone agrees on how best to divide these up. For an alternate division by story-world ontology see Tammi's divisions ("*Pale Fire*" and *Problems* 198-9); for another, based more closely on diegetic level, see Pier ("Between" para 9). They differ primarily over the status of Gradus and Zembla within the story-world.

blind date has gone wrong (JS), and eventually that she has committed suicide (JS and K), which starts JS on a meditation on life after death that results, years later, in the text of "Pale Fire" (JS and K). Likewise, the parallels between K on K and K on CX begin suggesting Kinbote's "secret" well before the reader gets to the give-away note. Kinbote maintains a homosexual lifestyle in defiance of his hetero-normative social environment, and in this as in much of his imperious personality, Kinbote seems to parallel the king's attributes. His delivery also evinces a note of desperation (see for example the urgent "and it is, it is enough" [*PF* 11]) that may suggest his role as the creator and maintainer of his Zemblan-kingship story quite early.[24]

Critics tend to offer more or less this kind of description of *Pale Fire* as a simple plot summary, thus skipping past an important point. The "true story of John Shade" is produced not by a simple discourse-story relationship, but rather by the production and combination of two separate stories, from two separate discourses, attributed to two separate people. Likewise, the reader produces the fantasy of Kinbote as Charles Xavier by combining the story-level of Kinbote's account of himself as foreign scholar and editor with that of his account of King Charles—accounts that Kinbote keeps deictically separate for most of his discourse. The cognitive approach clarifies the readerly process at work in this text as a dual recognition. The reader recognizes the individual texts as narratives (applying the narrative cognitive frame in order to read-out story from discourse), and then recognizes the cues in each text's discourse (deictics, tenses) and story (characters, events) as prompts to combine stories.

In *Pale Fire*, the kind of process by which the reader constructs (for example) the story-

[24] On Kinbote's desperation see Boyd ("Shade and Shape" 179, 181) and Hennard (306). Some scholars assume he commits suicide after completing his commentary, on the basis of Nabokov's comment in *Strong Opinions*. See for example Meyer (62) and Couturier (70). Wood (186) and Isaacs (320) argue against the relevance or reliability of that comment.

levels of K on JS and JS on JS determines what she has available when she "combines" them and creates the story of John Shade's life (not to mention Kinbote's, and the entirety of the textual history). This story alters the reader's relationship to the text, forcing a reconsideration of what has already been read. The novel's critical history attests to the feeling of paranoia[25] that this process produces in readers, since both Shade and Kinbote have their moments of unreliability, and especially since the sense of reality that the reader may have at any given moment is a product of recursive story-level combinations. This paranoia, coupled to a certain affinity between the combined JS story and the combined K/CX story, has impelled readers to look for a further story-level combination[26] that would attribute both poem and commentary to John Shade himself (Field, Bader, Ackerley, and sometimes Boyd), or to Vseslav Botkin, the name by which his colleagues may know Kinbote (Stegner, and sometimes Wood or even Nabokov himself).[27] Some Nabokov scholars, however, would argue that this direct reduction destroys everything genuinely meaningful about *Pale Fire* by willfully ignoring its undecidability (Kernan, McHale, Pier, Tammi), or bending its decidedly dual authorship out of shape (Alter, Pifer, Lodge, and Boyd's recent work). These three narrative conclusions—single authorship, dual authorship, or indeterminacy—allow for very different ethical or sociopolitical interpretations of character. The kind of "John Shade" who writes only his poem is a very different person from the "John

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[25] The paranoia here is the feeling that the implied author (who has a lot of Nabokov's wilier traits) is "up to something" that may implicate the reader if she reads the "wrong" way. See for example Reading (80, 84); for problems with readerly identification with the wrong characters see Rorty (xv); for the novel as a chess problem, see Ackerley (96) and Boyd ("Shade and Shape" 177). Glynn also suggests that *PF* puts the reader in "a quasi-delusional state" (84) and Ramey finds the Zemblan crown jewels and Nabokov himself in print on the novel's pages (201, 204, 206).

[26] Brian Boyd, for example, describes the "peculiar pressure the novel exerts towards a deeper accounting for the hum of half-heard harmonies behind its flagrant discords" (Boyd 176).

[27] As Reading puts it, humorously, "scholars have divided neatly down the middle between those who believe Shade authored the entire text and those who side with Kinbote, bedeviled by a radical fringe who maintain that the novel's author is Vladimir Nabokov" (85).

Shade" who also concocts Kinbote and his commentary. Likewise, the "Kinbote" who parasitically infests Shade's manuscript is very different from the "Kinbote / Vseslav Botkin" who creates multiple alter-egos in an outpouring of frustrated desire.

In fact, a number of critical projects seem to pick and choose discourse elements to suit the desired interpretive conclusion, a process that *Pale Fire*'s multifaceted text always rewards. It is not, finally, the goal of this chapter to argue for or against any of these positions, but rather to suggest that they result from a reading process that needs closer examination. In *Pale Fire*, the character traits upon which so many arguments over diegetic authorship hinge[28] are products of the reader's story combinations, not preexisting realities about which Shade and Kinbote write.[29] Because both narrators are autodiegetic, appearing as characters in their own stories,[30] the reader's sense of their personality depends upon her understanding of how they write, requiring her to revise their attributes and potential distortions, and leaving many important traits open to endless debate. At the same time, however, the conclusion that the novel is simply indeterminate at the story-level remains unconvincing because some of the combinations and reductions—those that produce the combined Kinbote/Charles Xavier story, and those that produce some sense of a true story of John Shade—do seem to indicate that the characters share a story-world reality—that their accounts are fallible *and* corrigible.

Given this seemingly aporetic situation, the question to be asked in the pages ahead is

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[28] See e.g. Ackerly's pursuit of Shadean sole-authorship; Boyd's opposition to it, based on Pifer's support of Lodge's position (Boyd 191); Wyllie's alternate objection (58); Belletto's use of textual coincidences (757); Jeffrey Meyers's comparison between Shade and Samuel Johnson (see also Tammi, *Problems* 199n.); Ramey's creation of a new insect species in Nabokov's image (198, 204, 206); and Isaacs's psychoanalytic riddle-solving (322-4).

[29] This problem leads Walsh to eschew the ascription of psychological attributes to characters (see Walsh 154). It is the same nervousness that undergirds the essays in Larmour's recent collection, which attempt to "shift [. . .] from a reading position of collusion with the text to one of collision" (Larmour 3). See also Reading's symptomatic approach (Reading 80).

[30] Shade also appears in Kinbote's story; the point about whether Kinbote appears in the poem is debatable (a "madman" and a "neighbor" are mentioned generically), but he certainly never appears by name.

simple. Upon what grounds might a critical account of story in *Pale Fire* make its case? It seems to me that any answer must focus upon how the text convinces the reader to integrate its story-levels, i.e., upon how the reader can make a story-world (or more than one) out of JS's and K's discourses. As the clarifications provided by Ricoeur's and Fludernik's cognitive analyses have suggested, this focus will require a clearer "under the hood" articulation of the feedback loop between story and discourse, and of the powerful effect of story-level combinations upon this loop. The present chapter will therefore argue that the theory of cognitive conceptual integration, or "blending," will best describe *Pale Fire*'s story-level transformations. This basically formalist account will then demonstrate that the three interpretive conclusions—single authorship, dual authorship, and indeterminacy—express different facets of the same reading process, each of which remains incomplete insofar as it attempts to exclude the other two. Interpretations, therefore, that depend on either the novel's determinately singular or dual narration (mostly sociopolitical and ethical readings), or, to no less a degree, upon its absolute story-level indeterminacy (i.e., deconstructive or postmodernist readings that assert the absence of a story-level reality) will remain likewise incomplete. The indeterminacy that lies at *Pale Fire*'s heart concerns neither diegetic authorial control nor the existence of a story-level reality, but rather the oscillation between two ways of making causal connections among the existents and events in the story-world that the narrators share.

Cognitive Blending and Narrative

Among the recent advances in cognitive linguistics, "cognitive conceptual integration,"

or simply "blending," has captured considerable critical attention, thanks to its simplicity and explanatory power.[31] Defined by Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier in *The Way We Think*, blending offers a dynamic model of the way the human mind aligns and combines seemingly disparate concepts and uses the insights so produced to revise its existing knowledge.

Turner's first work on blending, *The Literary Imagination*, founds his theory upon studies of metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson. These co-authors create a cognitive description of metaphoric language as the mapping of a "source" concept onto a "target," using the alignment of "conceptual schemas" to structure the combination process. Schemas are loose networks of relationship, and their most basic form is physical;[32] Turner calls them "skeletal patterns that recur in our sensory and motor experience. *Motion along a path, bounded interior, balance,* and *symmetry* are typical image schemas" (Turner16). They also include complex concepts for social interaction such as the concept of a restaurant,[33] which involves entities performing specific kinds of actions that make sense only in the restaurant milieu. Metaphorical descriptions align dissimilar concepts according to the structure of relationships they allow. Kinbote at one point quotes Franklin Lane's speculative remark: "What satisfaction to see [Aristotle] take, like reins from between his fingers, the long ribbon of man's life and trace it through the mystifying maze of all the wonderful adventure" (*PF* 200). In this quagmire of figurative language, the simple phrase "the long ribbon of man's life" is the grammatical cue for a complex combination, equating temporal experience with a spatial shape (see Fauconnier and Turner 17). It is not itself a conceptual combination, but it results from the author's cognitive process; the juxtaposition of

[31] In 2010, for instance, no less than four panels at the International Society for the Study of Narrative focused on blending-oriented narrative theories.
[32] The present section will introduce a considerable number of technical terms. Although I will define these in the text as they appear, these terms and their definitions may also be found in Appendices for easy reference.
[33] See e.g. Sinding (591).

grammatical terms can also prompt the reader to conduct the same combination. However, since the present study focuses on the processes involved in narrative reading, the troubling question of whether the reader's and author's cognitive procedure is really "the same," not to mention what "the same" could mean in such circumstances, must remain bracketed.

Turner modifies the static one-way relationship depicted in Lakoff and Johnson, however, to allow for dynamic feedback from the metaphoric combination to the input sources—and also for two-way combinations. Instead of seeing metaphor as a map from a source-concept to a target-concept, Turner sees it as the creation of a new "blended" concept that can inherit schematic structure from more than one input. For example, once a reader sees "the long ribbon of a man's life," neither the concept of "ribbon" nor that of "a man's life" will ever quite be the same again. Turner's insight here is that the cognitive skill that allows humans to use schematic structure to combine dissimilar or unrelated concepts is a general process applicable well beyond literary metaphor. It is a method for making sense of physical and social environments that lies at the heart of cognition itself.

In *The Way We Think*, Gilles Fauconnier and Turner define blending as a set of relationships between "cognitive frames," and the mental material that fills "roles" within these frames. Cognitive frames are habitual schemas like the situations and objects associated with the linguistic term "restaurant," which include a situation that has roles to be filled (staff, customers, menus), and relationships between roles (menus provide information, customers order food, staff-members prepare and serve food, and so forth). Actual people and objects can be understood as "filling" roles within the "restaurant" frame. Fauconnier and Turner also clarify their reliance on the theory of "mental spaces," the "small conceptual packets constructed as we

think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action."[34] Blended concepts, they argue, have a specific cognitive structure, representable by a flow-chart diagram that consists of four spaces (see Figure 1). Two "input" spaces contain roles and relationships. In the above example, the notion of a "ribbon" includes a narrow, flexible material substance of some length; here, substance and size may vary, but the proportions between them (length greater than width, flexibility) and their conceptual fusion as a distinct object generally do not. The other input in the above example would include a general conception of a man's life, bounded temporally and including events and characteristics fused together to provide a sense of identity or person-hood. One "generic space" also contains the shared schematic structure, the aspects of frame and role common to both inputs. Here, the ribbon and the life share a basic image-schema of bounded

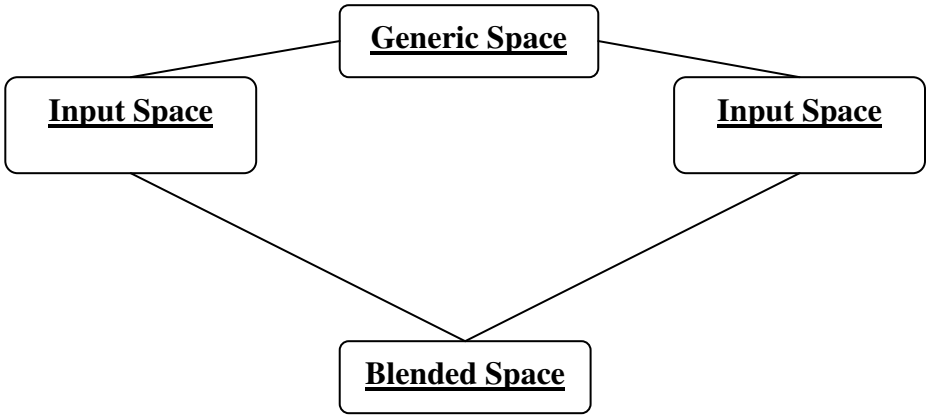

Figure 1. The basic blending diagram.

[34] See Fauconnier and Turner (102). They also express a belief that these mental spaces will be found to correspond to some concatenation of neurological matter and energy (23), but their analysis operates at the level of mental conceptions, not brain states. Indeed, they tend to refer more generally to physical experience as interpreted by the entire body, rather than directly to the brain.

spatial or temporal duration common to both "life" and ribbon. This shared space is usually drawn above and between the other two, its relationship to each indicated by a line. A fourth space, the "blended space," contains the blend. It includes all of the unique information inherited from the inputs. In this case, prompted by the linguistic marks, the reader combines her concepts for "ribbon" and "a man's life," creating a blended space that includes the bounded duration of "a man's life" as a physical space, rendered graspable and manipulable—interpretable—by the analytic skill attributed to Aristotle in the quote above.

The four-space blending diagram can be "nested" within larger blends (as in a pseudo-Helenic description of the Fates cutting a "life-ribbon"), or depicted in sequence to indicate the changes that befall the inputs and the generic space as a result of the blend. For example, the habitual use of metaphors like the "life-ribbon" has conferred upon time itself a linear quality that it may not necessarily possess. A sequence of diagrams would indicate, first, the generic and blended spaces indicated above (bounded duration and physically manipulable lifespan, respectively), but then a subsequent diagram might indicate that the "lifespan" input now has "linear" as an attribute of its main role (the self-identical sequence bounded at both ends), and that therefore the generic space should now indicate "*linear* bounded durations."

As may be visible from the preceding description, blending occurs in three stages: composition, completion, and elaboration. In the "composition" stage, the mind aligns the roles and relationships in the inputs to generate the generic space, the schematic elements they share (Fauconnier and Turner 42, 48). To create our blended "life-ribbon," the mind must recognize the shared boundedness and directionality in each input. In the "completion" stage, the mind pulls structure and roles from the inputs and creates the blended space, which may take roles or

relations from either input, as well as "variables," entities that fill the roles and take up the relations (48). The "man's life," in the blend with the ribbon, takes on a physicality and an object-like status, as well as a more determinately linear shape, but it also retains its properties as a human identity. Finally, in the "elaboration" stage, the mind fleshes out the blend, "treating [blends] as simulations and running them imaginatively according to the principles that have been established for the blend" (48)—a process that produces emergent structure, cognitive conclusions unavailable in the inputs. Blending always tends toward this goal: the production of new conceptual knowledge. The "life-ribbon" quotation prompts for a blend that produces a side-effect not available in the "man's life" or "ribbon" inputs, namely that life itself, *qua* ribbon-like spatial structure, can be bent and molded by Aristotle's hands.[35]

Blending confers a key advantage over earlier cognitive approaches such as Lakoff and Johnson's, for it need not be applied only to metaphor. Fauconnier and Turner argue that a tremendous range of human mental activity results from this single cognitive operation, the "blending" of mental concepts. It allows humans to blend sense-data with cognitive frames to *perceive* distinct objects (perceptual integration), to blend perceived objects with conceptual categories to *identify* objects (perceptual categorization), to blend extant conceptual categories to *deduce* new categories (conceptual categorization), to blend all of the preceding with linguistic categories to *produce* speech (proposition construction), and finally to blend linguistic prompts with categories, *creating* concepts for things not (yet) encountered (linguistic interpretation).[36]

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[35] And of course, since the metaphor appears in Kinbote's discourse, it suggests that he, Kinbote the philologist, may be bending and molding the life of John Shade as he recounts it.

[36] Some scholars dispute several of the lower-level cognitive operations; blending has a "ubiquity problem" (Bache 1617), since it seems to appear in so many facets of mental life. Because it originates in the study of linguistic metaphor, critics often find blending most convincing as it approaches the mental activities involved in conceptual categorization, proposition construction, and interpretation.

Cognitive linguistics confirms the phenomenological priority-structure suggested by Iser, Fludernik, and Walsh: the text does not convey or "state" meaning all by itself, but rather guides the reader's cognitive activity. Turner's insight is that this process has a specifiable sequence and structure that is as physical as it is linguistic, and has its foundation in a substratum of experience that itself grounds language use. Literary interpreters must therefore take care in orchestrating their blending diagrams to accommodate the specificity of their texts.

Recent blending studies have set out upon ever more narrative-friendly endeavors. Turner and Fauconnier attend closely to individual metaphorical statements, as do Coulson and Oakley and Per Aage Brandt.[37] The latter three authors actually add more spaces to the basic four-space diagram to accommodate their understandings of the influence of context upon the production of metaphorical meaning (see Coulson and Oakley 1516; Brandt 89). While these alternate models may prove useful in the analysis of metaphor, for the present study there seems to be no reason to proliferate mental spaces beyond the basic generic, input, and blended spaces.

Although a number of scholars have already begun to apply Fauconnier and Turner's insights to narrative, at the time of this writing a clear account of the story-discourse relationship remains unavailable. Elena Semino describes how a text can prompt for an extended metaphor that suggests character psychology, and Barbara Dancygier considers how a narrator's use of metaphor can prompt the reader to construct that narrator's point of view or focalization. Copland takes their insights and produces a typology that clarifies the difference between blends prompted by direct metaphorical statements like the "life ribbon" quotation above, and blends

[37] See Coulson and Oakley's "Blending and Coded Meaning," and Brandt's *Spaces, Domains, and Meaning*.

that the reader must compose and complete as a result of less explicit prompts.[38] Each of these approaches adds another piece to a potential "cognitive theory" of narrative reading, offering a glimpse of the cognitive machinery beneath conventional narratology. Semino's article looks behind the terminology for extended metaphor and the creation of character psychology. Dancygier's and Copland's studies of focalization point toward a potential elucidation of the vagaries of free-indirect discourse, offering a glimpse behind Genette's terminology: hetero/homo/auto-diegetic narration focalized through specific characters in specific contexts. They do not, however, address the story-discourse relationship directly, and their analyses focus on specific discourse-passages, rather than the large-scale story-structures at work in *Pale Fire*.

Michael Sinding's discussion of genre and Joyce's *Ulysses* does put blending to use on a larger scale. He suggests that genre itself should be considered a habitual form of schema, a "cognitive frame" that readers bring to bear on any given text. In studying *Ulysses*, a text often cited as "combining" the genres of prose satire and epic (among others), he focuses on the relationship between the specific texts said to be members of those genres: *The Odyssey* and *Ulysses* (Sinding 595). Bloom's name in the discourse prompts for a blend of the realistic / novelistic frame that constitutes the story of Bloom's life in Dublin, and the epic frame that constitutes the story of Odysseus—a blend that includes the contrasts between them, in tone, personality, and narrative form, to tragicomic effect. Something strange happens to Sinding's account, however. After discussing the novel, epic, and also a drama frame, he adds a "dream" frame, and argues that all of these frames end up subsumed under a trans-genre narrativity that

[38] See Semino's "Blending and Characters' Mental Functioning"; Dancygier's "Blending and Narrative Viewpoint," and Copland's "Reading in the Blend." Copland's "collaborative reader-reflexive blends" (Copland 143) parallel Brian McHale's "metareading" (McHale 113) or "antiparanoid" reading (187). These authors are continuing to refine their approaches, and their contributions to the forthcoming *Blending and the Study of Narrative* (publication estimated in late 2010) should help sketch out a clearer narrative-blending framework.

he sometimes identifies as a "novel," sometimes as a "Menippean satire" (605). It seems, then, that his analysis considers not distinct "genre" frames blended by the reader in the course of the reading, but rather a blend of distinct story-level worlds, all read according to the same standards of narrativity. Instead of demonstrating that *Ulysses* is a mixed-genre work, then, Sinding seems to have created a blending-based version of Monika Fludernik's term "narrativization," the process by which nonnarrative elements may be read according to a narrative frame.

I argue that Sinding's analysis implies more than he states, namely that the cognitive engine that drives story-production in the reader's mind is a blending process. Readers blend the linguistic (or graphical, and so forth) structure of the text with the network of mental spaces available within the narrative frame. A story *is* a blend. Unlike Fludernik's approach, however, blending theory allows for the inclusion of schemas for events, in addition to characters, objects, and relationships, as well as a dynamic model of the reading process that can accommodate changes to the grounding assumptions by which the reader reads. This chapter will now use this conception of a narrative-reading blend to explain *Pale Fire*'s demands on its readers, which include not only reading-out story from discourse, but also blending story-levels.

Story-Level Blending in Pale Fire*: The Case of the Single-Author Solutions*

As summarized above, *Pale Fire* has been the subject of a threefold dispute between advocates of a single-author discourse, dually-authored discourses, and story-level indeterminacy. A blending-based model of narrative reading now allows me to argue that these approaches diverge because of a shift in the kind of blending process that *Pale Fire* encourages

the reader to undertake. Accumulations of narrative detail convince readers to elaborate a story-world blend according to one or more of the models for story-level integration that the novel provides.

Although, as mentioned above, a comprehensive blending-theory of story and discourse remains unavailable at the time of this writing, the foregoing discussion should suggest how this cognitive frame ought to work. This chapter will now attempt to sketch the cognitive process involved in reading *Pale Fire* as narrative, examining each narrative level as a cognitive blend, in the following order:

a. To recognize the poem and its commentary as narratives is to blend their textual and graphical elements[39] with the expectations of the cognitive conceptual frame for narrative discourse, and then to blend the discourse's grammatical constructions with the conceptual frame for story, thereby "reading-out" story in a bipartite process.
b. To read "past" the individual story-levels and look for the reality to which they both refer (in the case of the "true story of John Shade") or for the reality that combines them (in the case of Kinbote's fantastical "King" identity) is to blend stories.
c. To generate either the single-author or dual-author solution is to blend already blended agglomerations of story-level material, creating a second-order blend.

The "reality" that Shade and Kinbote "share" is according to this account not literally a preexisting world to which they both refer, but rather a combination of their stories, a blend created by the reader, and subject to drastic revisions in the course of the novel. These revisions force a re-reading, a recursion that changes the reader's perceptions of key textual elements and

[39] The present discussion will focus on the linguistic text; for more on the role of graphical elements such as page numbering, paragraph breaks, and so forth within the discourse-story dynamic, see Drucker's insightful "Graphic Devices" (123).

story-level existents and events, and thereby licenses the second-order blending activity that produces all of the competing claims about authorship and meaning.

a. "Parsing" and "Direct-Story" Blends: Reading *Pale Fire*'s Text as Narrative

The first blending process allows a reader to read-out story from discourse, by recognizing a text as narrative discourse, and then mapping discourse elements onto the story frame. Blending theorists from Turner to Brandt have divided language-processing into two distinct general stages, the first involving a recognition of linguistic structure, and the second involving a reader's interpretation of the resultant linguistic content. An initial perceptual interpretation must allow the reader to recognize that the text fits into the general cognitive schema for communication (and not pattern repetition, or graphical coordination).[40] A (logically) subsequent blend must then apply the recognized frame to the recognized linguistic structure to produce meaning. Likewise, the phenomenological and cognitive approaches to narrative have suggested that, in narrative, the reader begins with discourse and then "reads out" story. These parallel developments suggest that the process of reading narrative involves a blending sequence that begins when a reader recognizes a text as suitable for "reading-out." At this stage, the reader blends textual elements with the narrative-discourse frame's expected elements. For the present I call this the "parsing" blend.

This "parsing" blend is so closely tied to the subsequent stage, the reading-out of story from discourse, that most theories of narrative see only one process, "reading narrative." In part,

[40] There is insufficient space for a full discussion of "linguistic structure" here. What is intended is a distinction between text "worth" interpreting as discourse, and text best interpreted according to some other cognitive frame (e.g. graphical illustration, expressive type, etc.). The distinction considered here is what Umberto Eco means when he asserts that in order to interpret a text, "[o]ne has to decide to 'see' it" (*Interpretation* 64).

this is because a text recognized as narrative discourse immediately prompts the reader to blend the linguistic evidence of narration (such as temporal deictics in tense and aspect, the use of personal pronouns, and so forth), with the frame for story. This frame provides roles (to be filled by a narrator and by existents including objects and characters) as well as relationships that may obtain between those roles, (including identity; disanalogy; representation, as of proper names meant to stand in for story-level characters; deixis, a relationship between narrator and existents; and creation, namely of fictional or counterfactual events by an auctorial narrator, for instance).[41] The "parsing" blend produces narrative discourse from a text (be it linguistic or otherwise), and the second blend—which I will dub the "direct-story" blend for the present—then produces story from discourse.

In *Pale Fire*, textual information prompts the reader to read the epic poem and its commentary as narrative discourse by providing details that render their narrative qualities recognizable (beginning a parsing blend), and rewarding that process with genuine insight (namely an effective direct-story blend). The reader may recognize and begin to parse Kinbote's Foreword according to an "academic discourse" frame, one that imposes standards of accuracy and precision, but Kinbote's style and voice quickly foreground his idiosyncrasies, and suggest that a "narrative discourse" frame should subsume the academic-sounding material. Kinbote begins with a scholarly tone and diction: "*Pale Fire*, a poem in heroic couplets, of nine hundred ninety-nine lines, divided into four cantos, was composed by John Francis Shade (born July 5, 1898, died July 21, 1959), during the last twenty days of his life, at his residence in New Wye, Appalachia, U.S.A." (*PF* 9). Thus far, the dry description, numerical information, and passive

[41] Identity, disanalogy, analogy, representation, and change are what Fauconnier and Turner call "vital relations" (see Fauconnier and Turner 47, 92-101; see also my Appendices).

voice ("was composed by") accommodate a reading as descriptive scholarly discourse (see Figure 2, below), but the preterite tense[42] and the preponderance of names and action-verbs already prompt the reader to recognize simultaneously the beginning of a narrative discourse. The phrase "the last twenty days of his life" suggests a story to be reconstructed about that life, and the location, a city not on American maps and a geographic locale rather than a state, also suggests a story to be told about the commentator, who may come from a foreign or fictional locale. Kinbote's Foreword provides a mounting preponderance of narrative cues, including an account of the poem's composition in the past tense, and the intrusion of the commentator's

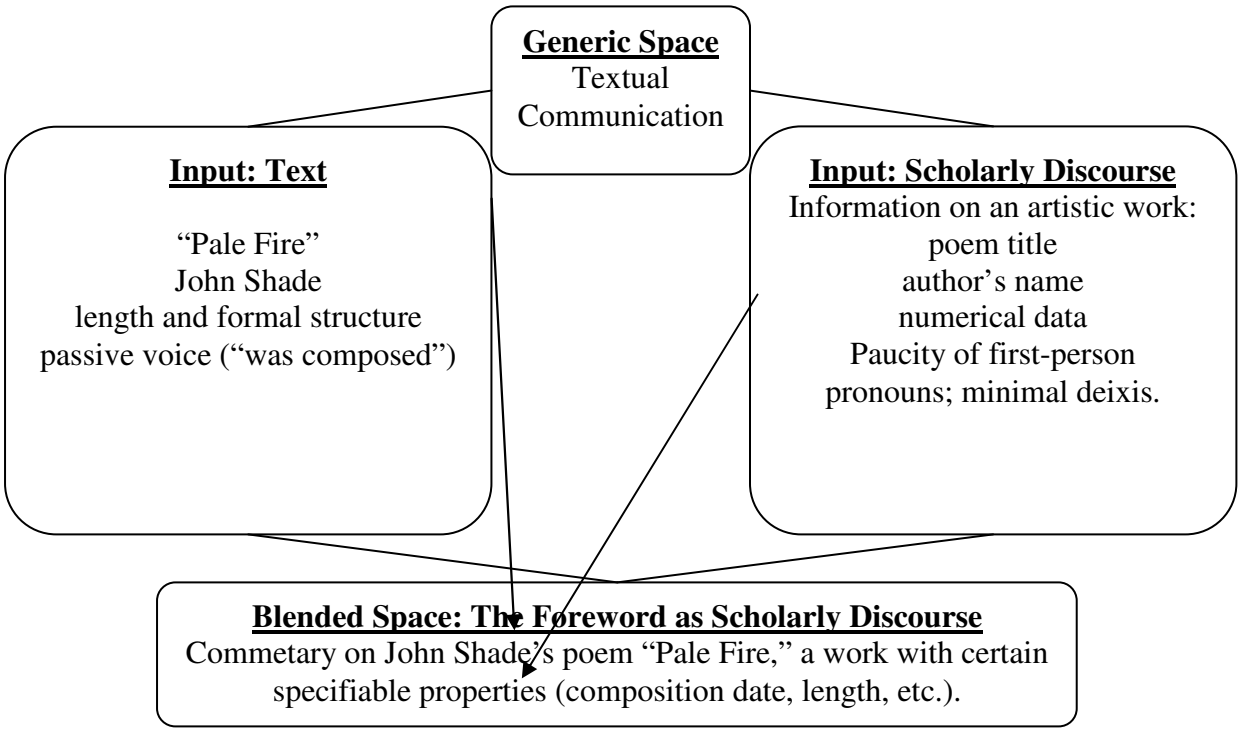

Figure 2. Academic discourse "parsing" blend for *Pale Fire*.

[42] For more on the preterite tense as a prompt for reading-as narrative, see Fleischman (62); Fludernik also covers deixis, tense, and aspect extensively in her theoretical chapters.

narrative situation, the already cited appearance of the amusement park (9).[43]

Recognizing the text as narrative discourse, the reader switches the parsing blend, adapting the information to that set of roles and relationships (see Figure 3). These "parsing" blends involve simply the recognition of the kind of discourse being read, a recognition continuously re-processed as the reader conducts the second blend and achieves further insight into the text she reads. In reading *Pale Fire*, the total textual material (including the epigraphs, Nabokov's name, the subtitle "a novel")[44] combines to prompt the reader to conduct a "parsing" blend that reads the book as narrative, looking not for purely factual information about "Pale Fire" the poem, but rather for a story about John Shade and Charles Kinbote. The reader therefore immediately begins the blending activity that will produce for her these characters, the relations between them and other existents, and the events in which they participate—in short, she begins to conduct a "direct-story" blend.

To understand the division between discourse and story this way is to change the traditional narratological concept of the narrator. Here, the autodiegetic narrator—Kinbote, for example—stands in a liminal position between discourse and story. In the parsing blend that produces discourse, the narrator exists solely as a label ("Kinbote") and a set of pronouns and verb tenses ("I was," "There is," etc.), grouped together under the discourse-frame by the reader's recognition process. In the direct-story blend, he becomes imbued with some degree of person-hood and becomes also the source of the discourse. Having recognized the product of narration, namely discourse, the reader begins to create (as a back-formation) a storyteller, the

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[43] As Wood puts it, highlighting most of these same details, "We wonder at first [. . .] what kind of text this is; but soon wonder more seriously whose text it is, and what is the matter with him" (181). See also Tammi (*Problems* 204) for a similar framing of the problem.

[44] On paratexts, Pier ("Three Levels," "Between") provides valuable insights, as do Drucker ("Graphic Devices") and Richardson ("A Theory").

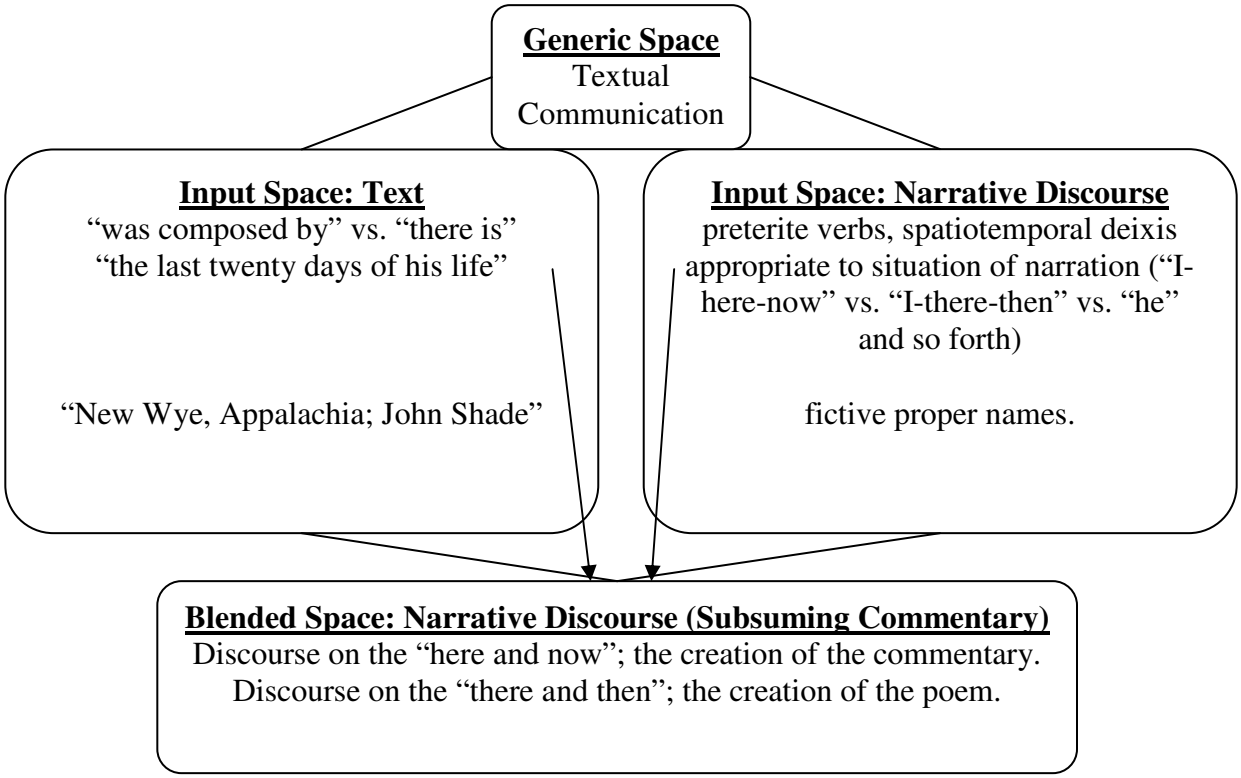

Figure 3. Narrative "parsing" blend for *Pale Fire.*

narrator, Kinbote. The reader fits Kinbote into the story-frame, which holds the roles and relationships for existents and events. Kinbote gains here the "causation" connection to the narrative discourse, closing the loop and permitting the reader to continue through the discourse in search of further information about the kind of narrator he is.[45] The communication model that places the narrator's work in composing the discourse (epistemically) prior to the reader's encounter with the text is accurate *as part of the story*, but cognitively inaccurate for the reading process that generates story from discourse.

[45] The situation becomes more complicated with heterodiegetic narrative that lacks a clear narrator-character, but none of the novels considered in this dissertation are heterodiegetic, and so this is not the place for further discussion.

In carrying out the parsing blend (reading a text "as" narrative discourse), the reader performs what Fauconnier and Turner call a "mirror" blend, where the mind lines up two comparable structures and integrates them directly in a one-to-one correspondence (Fauconnier and Turner 122-3)—in this case matching the structure (the roles and relationships) of the grammatical information in the text with the cognitive frame for narrative discourse.[46] The text includes spatiotemporal deictic distinctions among the pronouns and verb tenses that match directly to the expectations for narrative discourse. When the reader begins to "read-out" story from discourse, however, she does not create a mirror-blend.

Story elements have to be extrapolated from the discourse structure in a process of transformation. As demonstrated above, the statement about the amusement park says a great deal about Kinbote's story-level situation that does not literally appear "in" the discourse structure. Instead, the blend that produces story from discourse is a "single-scope" blend, a "network [that] has two input spaces with different organizing frames, one of which is projected to organize the blend. Its defining property is that the organizing frame of the blend is an extension of the organizing frame of one of the inputs but not the other" (Fauconnier and Turner 126). Here, the reader constructs a story level on the basis of prompts in the discourse (see Figure 4), but organizes those prompts according to the story-level cognitive frame. This frame demands, minimally, the kind of portrayal of embodied human consciousness that Fludernik describes (including Phelan's rhetorical situation of a narrator and its narration of some events). This means that, contrary to many theories of narrative, but particularly contrary to Genette,

[46] The question as to whether such parsing blends *have always been* mirror blends is an interesting one; I would argue, following Fludernik, that newer media might re-work the narrative frame itself, making room for new expectations, as in expectations for continuity editing in film (see, again, Eder's discussion of Bordwell and Brannigan).

"story" itself is not intrinsically a linguistic phenomenon. Two important corollaries follow, one already commonly accepted, the other less so: a.) The parsing blend may adapt linguistic material, but it might just as easily involve any other medium, including film or live acting (Chatman and Ryan both embrace this conclusion, among many others). b.) Story itself is at least partly pre-linguistic, and should not be considered simply a large-scale sentence or predication.

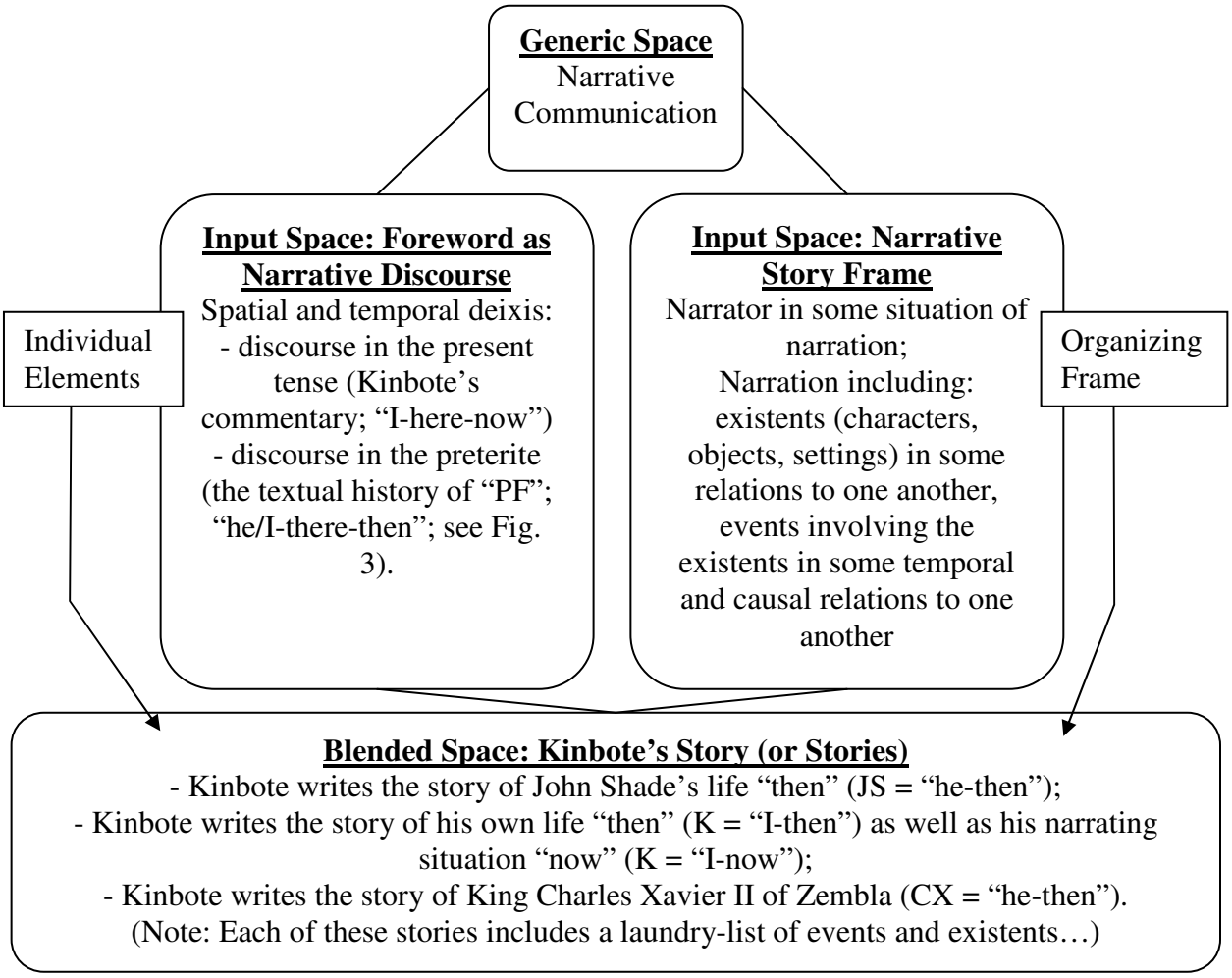

Figure 4. "Direct-story" blend for *Pale Fire.*

Maximal definitions of story include existents, relations of causality, and temporal sequences of events.[47] The present discussion will not argue for or against a minimal or maximal definition for the story-frame, since Kinbote's commentary and Shade's poem satisfy most of the maximal-definition requirements;[48] the important point here is that, having followed the textual promptings and applied the twinned narrative frame (discourse and story) to *Pale Fire*, readers have always found rewarding global insights into the lives of Kinbote and Shade.

John Shade's "Pale Fire" undergoes much the same process as that sketched here for Kinbote's Foreword. The first lines, "I was the shadow of the waxwing slain / By the false azure in the windowpane" ("PF" 1-2) seem like poetic (epic, lyric) discourse, but poetically-inclined critics have always been troubled by the preterite verb (see Wood 189, for example), which may begin the process that inclines the reader to treat Shade's poem more like narrative discourse. Further lines incline toward the same kind of evocation of characters, objects, and events that begins to seep into Kinbote's commentary, here a description of window-watching: "And from the inside, too, I'd duplicate / Myself, my lamp, an apple on a plate: / Uncurtaining the night, I'd let dark glass / Hang all the furniture above the grass" (5-8). A perfective aspect creeps in, suggesting a narrator narrating his own prior habitual actions (a dual deictic center, as Dancygier or Fludernik might observe), as does the constellation of personal pronouns. The farther the reader goes, the more like prose Shade's poem seems.[49] His discourse prompts for a simple

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[47] See Chatman's work on "Story" in *Story and Discourse*, as well as Kafalenos's work on causality (Kafalenos 7) and Ryan's discussion of events and actions taken by characters (Ryan 8), to name only a few.

[48] There is also insufficient space to explain where the frames for existents and events come from; Ricoeur and Fludernik both suggest that they come from embodied experiences in the world, and Fauconnier and Turner argue that they are at least partly physical and prelinguistic. Much work remains to be done in articulating the connections between these three theoretical systems; some of it I will attempt to undertake in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, but some of it must be set aside for future consideration.

[49] Meyer also comes to this conclusion (75), as does Glynn (94); Isaacs agrees, but suggests another possible genre, that of the riddle (Isaacs 319). Tammi maintains that the whole book can only be a novel ("*Pale*" 572).

direct-story blend, in which the reader constructs an account of Shade's life as narrated retrospectively by the poet himself (JS on JS). The reader applies the discourse's "I" to both the present story-level role of Shade-the-writer, and the past role of the Shade-the-boy, creating an identity connection between these roles, and a "creator" connection between the present role and the text of "Pale Fire" itself.[50]

Blends never simply happen, nor does the text simply cause them to happen. Each blend must "do cognitive work"—must offer what blending theorists call "global insight" into the situation posed by the inputs and their generic space.[51] In the case of the parsing blend, the reader achieves the global insight that the text is a narrative masquerading as a poem and commentary. In the direct-story blend, the global insight consists of the cognitive network of the story of John Shade's life as described by John Shade (JS on JS). His complex poem details his childhood seizures or fainting-fits, his love affair and life with Sybil, their agony over Hazel's fate, and then his poetic pondering over a potential afterlife, the impetus for the poem. As he finishes "Pale Fire," then, Shade brings his reader full-circle, from the present situation of narration (beginning with "I was") through Shade's entire life, and back to the present narration.

The blending process by which the reader builds this story level, while complicated, remains more or less graspable in the terms of conventional narratology, so one emblematic example must suffice for this analysis. Describing Hazel, Shade writes, "She might have been you, me, or some quaint blend: / Nature chose me so as to wrench and rend / Your heart and

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[50] It is a slippery distinction to maintain; as mentioned above, Genette handles it via his tripartite formal structure; Chatman puts the narrator squarely in the discourse, as does Prince, but in both cases the distinction becomes difficult to maintain because of the indistinct boundary between the textual "telling" (constituted by the discourse) and the *act* of telling (an event in the story, particularly in autodiegetic narration). Here, then, "autodiegetic narration" refers to the discourse-level appearance of deictic centers for "I-here-now" and "I-there-then," in addition to the customary "he-there-then"—*and also* to the story-level construction of a sequence of actions carried out by a character, beginning with narrated actions, and concluding with the act of narration itself.

[51] See for example Fauconnier and Turner (77, 82, 92, 129, 151); Copland (146).

mine" (293-5). The reader adds these lines to the ongoing story-level blend derived from the foregoing discourse. Here, one input of the "direct story" blend "JS on JS" contains grammatical information from the present section of the discourse, while the other contains the story information as gleaned so far. The blended space contains the modified story, "JS on JS" (see Figure 5). Composing the blend, the reader uses information from the preceding story process to align discourse elements with story elements: pronouns with characters, verb phrases with relationships among existents, and verb tense and aspect with the deictic situation.

Completing the blend, the reader learns new information: that John believes Hazel resembled him, to her detriment, and even more important—as Wood has cogently argued—that he chooses to state this as an intentional gesture made by "Nature" toward himself and Sybil (see Wood 193-4). Hazel's "heart" is not included in the discourse, and therefore "her" misfortune is really John and Sybil's misfortune. This realization reverberates back up through the inputs, modifying the reader's sense of the (JS on JS) story so far. The lines that address Sybil for example, "How could you [. . .] / Have let uncouth, hysterical John Shade / Blubber your face, and ear, and shoulder blade?" (272-4), at first perhaps charming self-deprecation, take on a new significance. Shade's wife of "forty years" (275) seems impenetrable as a desiring or otherwise motivated subject.[52] As subsequent lines take up the present story-level blend as one of their inputs, this information will carry forward, to be reinforced or weakened.

[52] This reading needs emphasis against those who prefer to think Shade "a highly sincere and sensitive man who needs to exorcize his fear of death and his affliction after his daughter's disappearance" (Couturier 57); see also Zunshine (171) and Meyers (35). In answer, Wood asserts that Shade "has done parental anguish in close-up and young torment in long-shot, so that Hazel's suicide almost appears to be something that happens to him rather than to her" (193); see also Glynn (88).

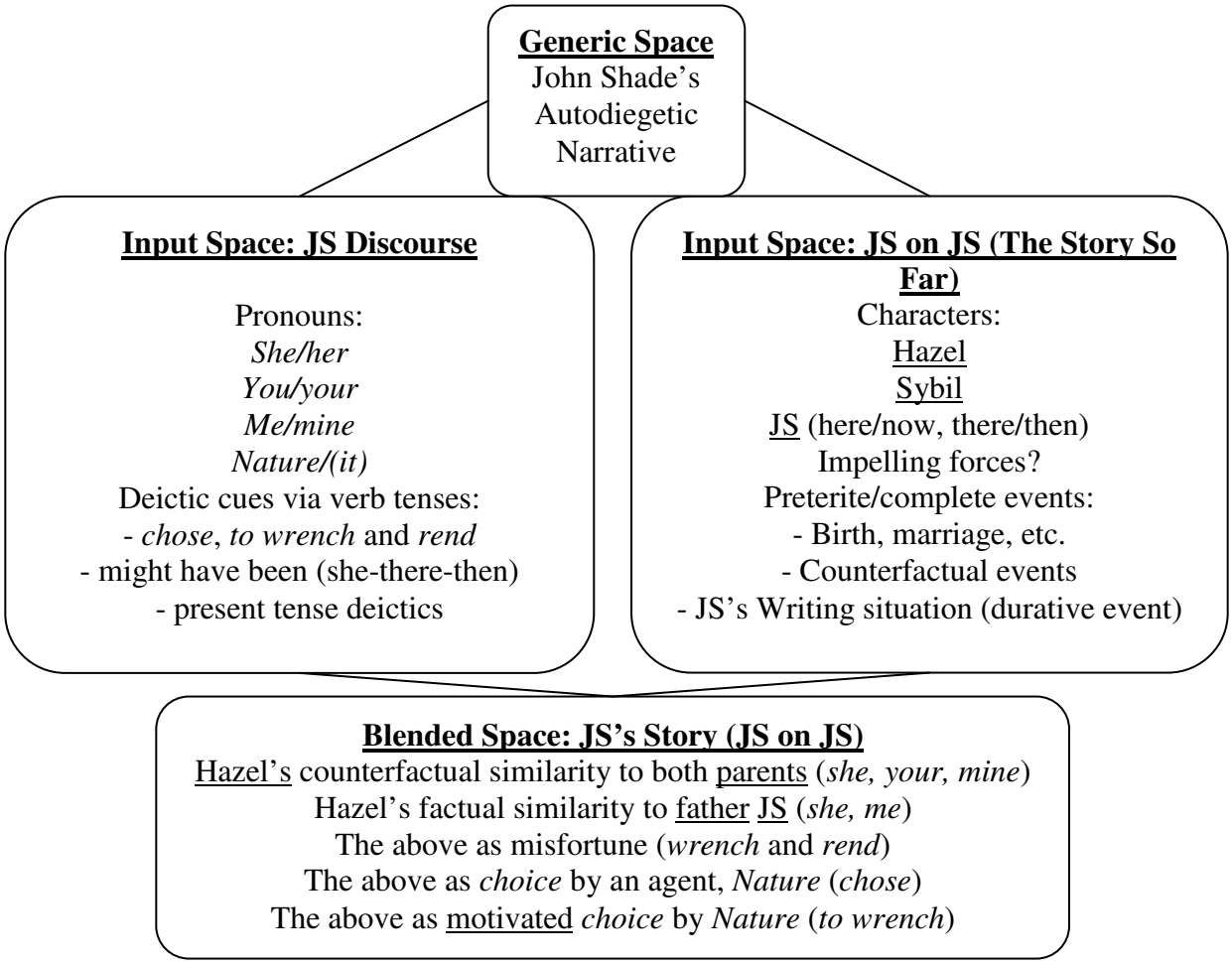

Figure 5. "Direct-story" blend for the JS on JS story.

Kinbote, too, tells John Shade's story in his own inimitable style, but although the story-level that the reader may construct from Kinbote's Shade fragments (and these are few, compared with K on K, K on CX, and K on G) shares most characters and settings with Shade's poem, the relationships are different. In Kinbote's Shadean story, Sybil seems almost Shade's nemesis, a wife who does not understand him—Shade is "hen-pecked" (132). She tries to curtail John's contact with one Charles Kinbote, who resents her overprotectiveness intensely. In Kinbote's version of the story, he and John are fast friends, takers of amiable walks together in the New Wye countryside around their neighboring houses (e.g. 142-3). The reader begins to see

through this version quickly, for instance when Kinbote remarks, "This friendship was the more precious for its tenderness being intentionally concealed" (19). From Kinbote's story of the intimate John and the hostile Sybil, the reader most likely reads-out a revised version of Kinbote's real relationship to the couple: that of the self-imposing and incredibly nosy neighbor.

Although he has little patience with her as a person, Kinbote devotes more (and more earnest) attention to Hazel Shade. He dutifully describes in detail her encounters with "some appalling 'psychokinetic' manifestations" (128)—flying household objects and relocated furniture—as well as an equally detailed chronicle of her experiences chasing ghosts in the "old barn" referred to in Shade's poem. He goes so far as to quote from Hazel's notes, which he has obtained from a Shade acquaintance (145), and to present an embedded dramatic script, "The Haunted Barn," chronicling an unsuccessful séance (147-8). A parsing blend enables the reader to incorporate the dramatic form as narrative, as Sinding might observe, and then to read-out story-level information.[53] In the parsing blend (of a play being read as narrative), the reader aligns the archetypal family roles in the first stage instruction and the dialogue tags with the proper names in the last stage instruction (an activity shared with drama-reading, albeit not with drama-watching). The reader then aligns all of these with the K on JS story-frame in a direct-story blend, and applies a causal connection between Kinbote and the text: he compiles the play from Hazel's notes, which remain unavailable to the reader. In the direct-story blend's first input, then, lies the present dramatic/narrative discourse, and in the other lies the K on JS story so far, including his (unreliable)[54] portrait of John and Sybil, and of Hazel as the diligent

[53] I travel very rapidly here. The parsing of the play-within-Kinbote's-notes deserves more attention, but such an analysis (be it ever so interesting) would be too lengthy here.
[54] In Phelan's terms, Kinbote is unreliable in his "interpretations" and "evaluations," but frequently reliable in his perceptions and "reporting" (see Phelan, "Estranging").

investigator of the supernatural. Completing the blend, the reader learns of the story-world events that Kinbote wants to chronicle: the Shade family goes together to the old barn, sits patiently for an hour, sees no spirits, and gives up.

This part of the K on JS direct-story blend allows for global insight into the family dynamic as Kinbote sees it, thereby suggesting connections between Kinbote's and Shade's accounts. In Kinbote's, John appears as a well-meaning but distant father, and in Shade's, John attempts to speak at some length about his family, but mentions them largely insofar as their experiences leave marks upon him (and also help guide his poetry).[55] Shade muses over her "strange fears, strange fantasies," but Kinbote provides an account of those fears and fantasies that seems altogether more penetrating (if slightly more inclined toward fantasy itself) than Shade's. While the shared names, places, and events already incline the reader to compose a blend, these *differences* of account also prompt for the combined-story blend that will constitute the "true story of John Shade."

These initial steps in the blending process are but brief sketches, since the narrativity in Kinbote's commentary and Shade's poem is relatively easy to discern, and has been asserted unproblematically throughout the novel's critical history. What is troubling about *Pale Fire* is not that it can be read "narratively," but rather, as has just been suggested, that the stories it produces are multiple and contradictory. To cope with such contradictions, the reader will have to blend story-levels.

[55] Wood comes to a similar conclusion (194), as does Glynn (95); they also cite Shade's account of Hazel's childhood troubles as something done to him (see "PF" 309-14).

b. Combined-Story Blends: John Shade's Life and the Kinbote Who Would Be King

Blending affords insight by compressing "vital relations," relationships between roles, events, and frames. When the reader sees Shade's and Kinbote's story-levels chronicling the same characters and events, the parallels prompt and even generate pressure for a blending process that conjoins their distinct stories into a third story—the "combined-story" blend.[56] Most accounts of *Pale Fire* take this process for granted, assuming that readers refer directly from the pronouns, proper nouns, and deictic centers in the discourse to a story level that Shade and Kinbote share and reflect with differing clarity. But this story level does not preexist the reader's encounter with the discourse.[57] Rather, the narrators' accounts generate story-level information, and their sets of information have both similarities and dissimilarities. The relationship between the discourses and the "true story" of John Shade is not a simple discourse-story relationship. It is a blend of two stories.

In creating what I will call "JS-True," the reader blends the stories of JS on JS and K on JS, and then uses the blend to reflect back on the discourse as the reading continues, in an ongoing dynamic "loop." The reader recognizes two narratives, and this set of roles and relationships (narrator-character causally connected to text) occupies the "generic space" for the JS-True blend. As the reader reads on, however, the novel provides further specificity. The generic space now includes a "narrative about John Shade," centered upon the (story) role and (discourse) pronouns and name that blend to create a story-level character (see Figure 6). The

[56] At this point even the terminological distinction between "story" and "story-world" seems here imprecise. Insofar as that distinction is meaningful, it differentiates between a set of events being recounted, and the broader world of existents and events available for recounting. It therefore does not capture the present distinction between direct-story and combined-story blends.

[57] Wood almost reaches the same conclusion when he describes the difficulty of arriving at "reality" in this novel (177); see also Glynn (84).

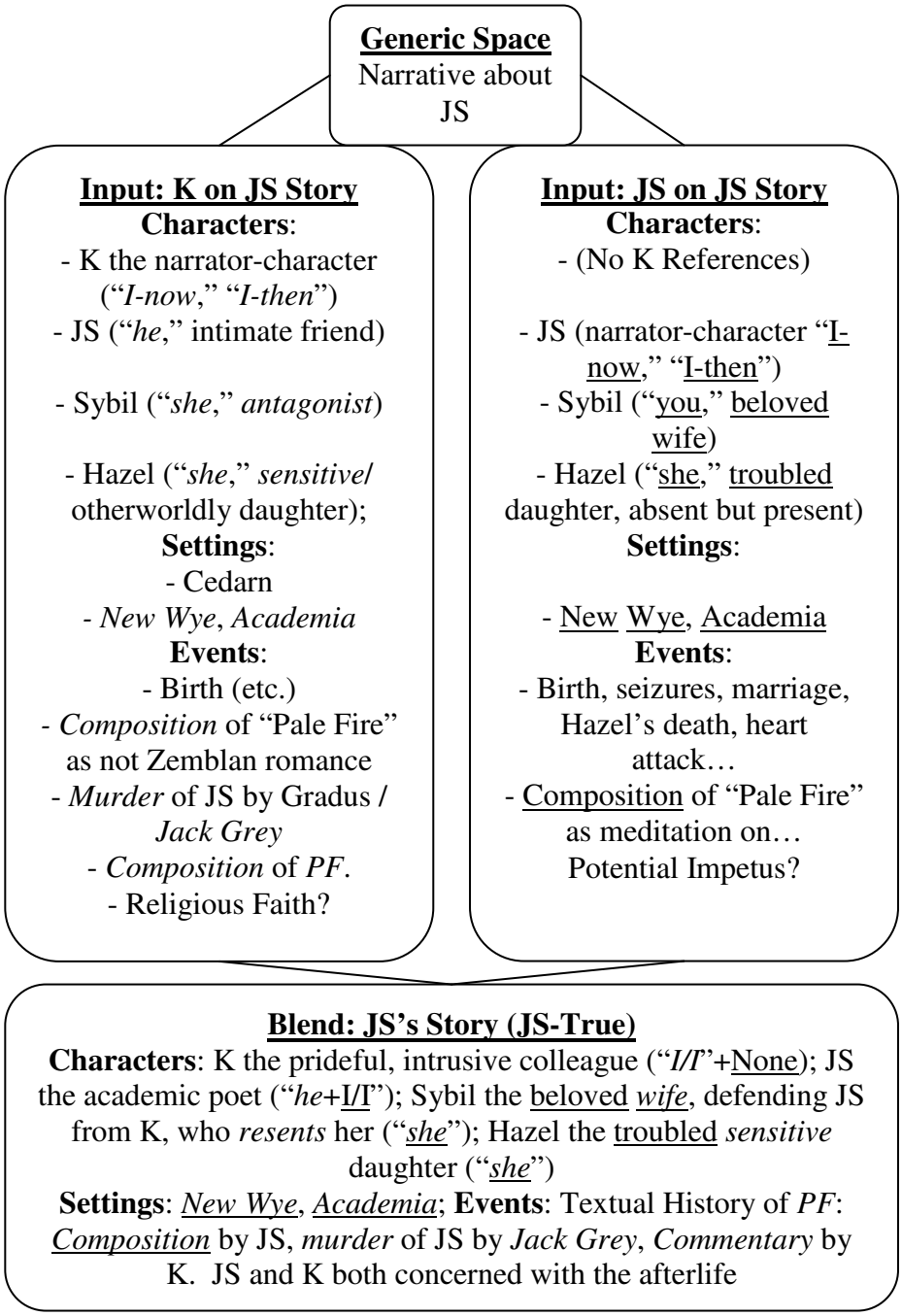

Figure 6. "Combined-story" blend for the JS-True story.

twin inputs include the discourse and story information available at any given time from JS on JS and K on JS. In the composition phase of this blend, the reader looks for shared existents and parallel relationships between the two story-levels; most of these concern the Shades. Similarities begin to form, as both narrators describe Shade's poetry, his family, and his general affability; but disanalogy connections also form, namely between the different treatments of Sybil and Hazel (and a certain difference about "a certain king"—to be considered below).

The reader completes the blend by selectively adopting relationship structures, role-filling elements (proper names align with concatenations of traits and actions to create character, for instance), and traits from *both* Kinbote's and Shade's story-levels. The JS-True blend is thus what Fauconnier and Turner call a "double scope" blend, where the two frames do not share an identical organizing frame, and where each input contributes not only roles, but framing material (the relationships between roles) as well (see Fauconnier and Turner 131). The reader compresses the analogy and disanalogy relationships into identities, so that when Shade says "you" and Kinbote says "Sybil," the reader recognizes a single character, but when Kinbote's discourse paints her negatively, the reader's impression of Sybil remains positive, and the disanalogous elements reflect back on Kinbote's predilections as commentator.[58] These compressions frequently make a fool of Kinbote, as even a *Pale Fire* neophyte will notice, but with regard to Hazel something odd happens. Here, the disanalogies continue to make Kinbote look intrusive or downright callous (see for example *PF* 237), but they also begin to make Shade

[58] This is how one of Couturier's "reading contracts" works (63); Glynn (86) and Lodge (161) also read Kinbote this way.

seem less positive.[59] The blended version of Hazel is an enigma, her life and thought strangely opaque to Shade, but, as Wood has also noted, oddly accessible to Kinbote (Wood 188).[60]

The JS-True blend's elaboration has a profound effect on the combined characters of the "real" Kinbote and the "real" John Shade. Hazel and Sybil remain distant characters from each male narrator's *origo*, his deictic speaking-center, but Kinbote refers directly to Shade, whereas Shade fails to refer at all to Kinbote. Kinbote's absence in Shade's poem (not to mention his reliably unreliable assertions regarding their friendship) reflects back on *his* role as the composer of the commentary that gives the reader access to everything. The Shade presented in Kinbote's story reflects back, likewise, not only on the "I-past" instance chronicled by Shade, but also the "I-present" instance of Shade the chronicler, Shade as the agency that results in the poem "Pale Fire." Because of the causal relationship between the characters and the texts they create, the reader feels a constant pressure to continue re-composing, re-completing, and re-elaborating the combined-story blend in search of a clearer sense of each narrator's characteristics and trustworthiness—which in turn "loops" back and informs the direct-story blend.[61]

At the same time, in constructing the JS-True blend, the reader also becomes aware of a certain degree of narratorial self-obsession. Shade and Kinbote draw their reader close, confiding from the perspective of "I-here-now" about their intimate past experiences as "I-then," and pushing more or less everybody else ever farther away. Kinbote is brazen about his self-centeredness, while Shade lavishes love upon his wife and pity upon his daughter, but mostly to

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[59] This is Couturier's fourth "reading contract," the one he takes to be the sum total of all of the contracts in *Pale Fire*, wherein the reader must "test the commentary against the poem and the poem against the commentary" (61), an approach he shares with Pier (see above), and also with Jenefer Shute (415-7).

[60] Although Kinbote sometimes resents Hazel for occupying John's attention, Hazel's silenced voice speaks loudly in its near-total absence from Shade's narrative—he quotes her only when she asks him questions about poetry (see "PF" 363-74). Kinbote in some ways usurps her voice, but, fantasy-prone though he is, he seems willing to give her perspective more credit than does Shade. See also Meyer's similar conclusion (129).

[61] Reading reaches a similar conclusion about the poem, but not the commentary (Reading 84).

show the reader about *his* love and *his* pity—and eventually *his* insight into the afterlife, as the poem digresses farther and farther from Shade's social reality. This shared self-obsession creeps into the generic space, so that the reader may find herself seeing "two self-obsessed men narrate John Shade's life," i.e., a further level of specificity about the roles and relationships that the stories share. She may then worry about the women's marginalization in Shade's poem.[62] The most important point about the JS-True blend at this point in the analysis, however, is the nature of the blended space. It constitutes a world to which both narrators refer, a shifting "reality" against which the reader will measure the two narrators' accounts. This is to say, it *produces* a third, combined-story level. The other major combined-story blend in *Pale Fire* does not.

The story-level integration that compresses the apparently autodiegetic story of Kinbote on the life and times of Kinbote (K on K) with the apparently heterodiegetic story of Kinbote on the life and times of King Charles Xavier II of Zembla (K on CX) has occupied a great deal of critical attention since the novel's publication, but is actually simpler and easier to follow than that which produces the true story of Shade's life (JS-True). As outlined above, the reader composes the K/CX blend by aligning Kinbote's haughty demeanor, his homosexual orientation and activity, his Zemblan descent, and his thorough knowledge of Charles's life with the identical characteristics on the part of the King—even a "wife" mentioned only once in the K on K strand (*PF* 67). The reader completes the blend by combining the characters "Kinbote" and "Charles II," and reading everything that Kinbote's ("I") discourse says about Charles ("he") as referring to the same character, a deceptive "I" (See Figure 7).

This blend also clarifies Gradus's role. He appears as a denizen of the Zembla fantasy,

[62] Evidence against Shade's innocence abounds, including signs of alcoholism and a recurrent suggestion of marital infidelity—with students, no less (see *PF* 16, 175-7; "PF" 576-9).

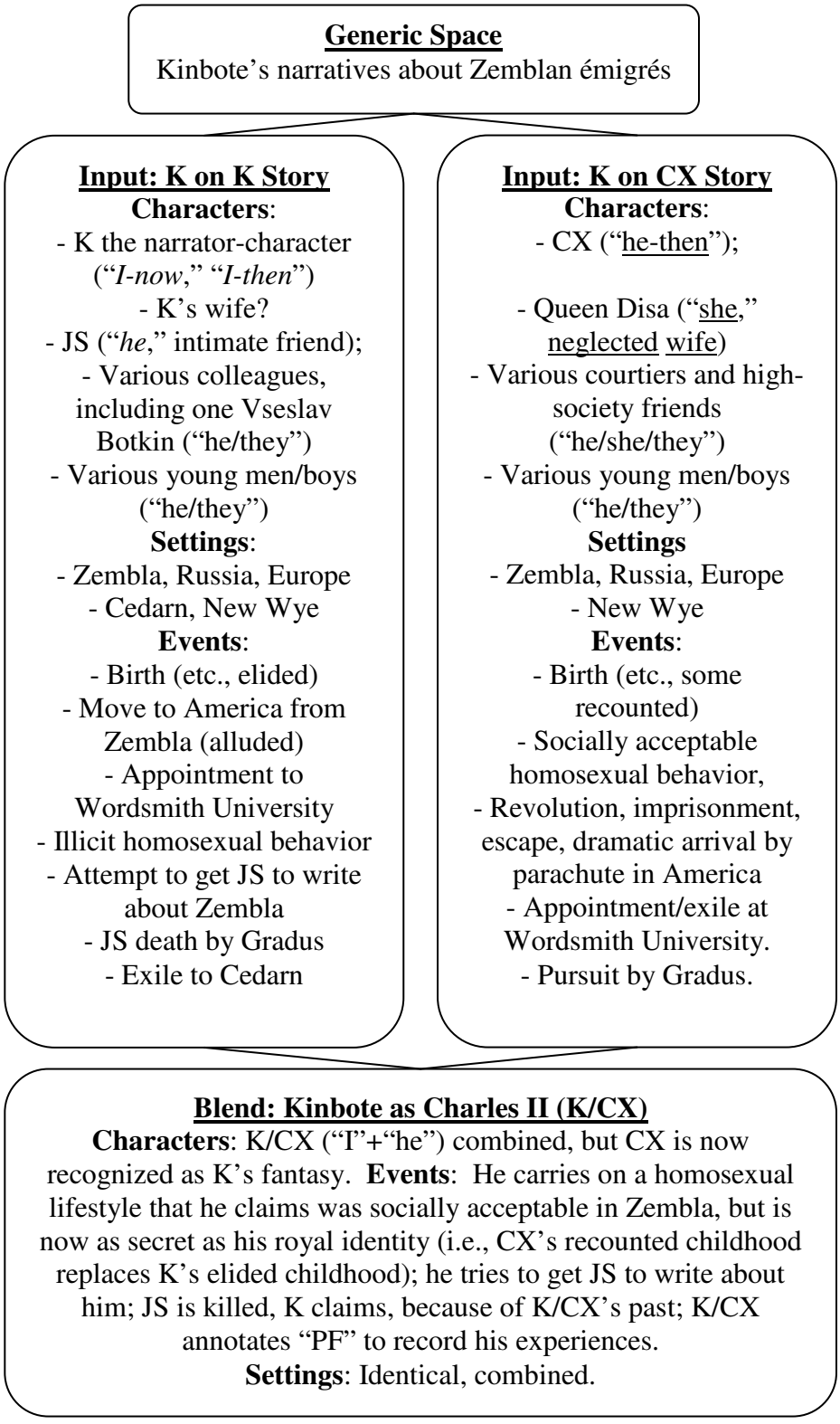

Figure 7. "Combined-story" blend for the K/CX story

his role in the story back-dated to the moment when John Shade begins the poem, and interpolated within Kinbote's notes on Shade's writing process in a contrapuntal pattern. The K/CX blend conveniently allows Kinbote to declare that "I had been not a 'chance witness' but the protagonist, and the main, if only potential, victim" (228). By now the reader will read Kinbote's "I" as the doubled K/CX character, and therefore take the subsequent account of Jack Grey's activities and death as "real" within the story-world of John Shade's life—at the expense of "Jakob Gradus's" story-world reality. Gradus's textual appearance seems directly motivated by Kinbote's endeavors to make of Shade's death a meaningful event instead of accidental mistaken identity[63]—and also to place himself, as usual, at the center of the action.[64] Readers know enough to read past these claims, and see the "real" Gradus as Jack Grey, a convicted psychotic bent on exterminating Judge Goldsworth, whose house Kinbote rents (see e.g. *PF* 65).

The K/CX blend's elaboration process reverberates throughout the text of *Pale Fire* in three important respects: its impact on the reader's blended version of the "real" Kinbote; its impact on the JS-True blend (which follows from the preceding); and its impact on the novel's blend-architecture itself (which follows from both of the preceding). The blended Kinbote character conjured by the K on JS storyline seems a self-important, inconsequential footnote to Shade's life, but the Kinbote character who would have his readers believe he is an exiled king adds a powerful and doubled level of unreliability to his "I-now" narrating persona. Some would see the delusional Kinbote as dangerous, but he is neither Jack Grey nor Humbert Humbert.[65]

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[63] Boyd dislikes the idea that Kinbote would modify the Zemblan romance to accommodate Jack Grey (Boyd 195-6). Wood makes a convincing counterargument (198, 200-1). Zunshine (165) and Glynn (85) both simply assume the "amended Zembla" interpretation. The parallels between Shade's and Nabokov's father's death have also encouraged some biographical readings of *PF*. See for example Boyd (183), and Meyer (98).

[64] Zoric comes to the same conclusion in the course of diagnosing Kinbote's peculiar psyche (Zoric 182-3, 185).

[65] Some critics see Kinbote as a rapist and "a secret pederast" (Meyers 35); as "the epitome of sexual depravity and moral perversion" (Wyllie 58); and as a literal copycat of Humbert's abduction and rape of Lolita, with Shade's text

Rather, the blend highlights a disanalogy: Kinbote's homosexual encounters in New Wye, the object of some concern to his academic employers and colleagues, contrast sharply with the socially accepted sexual acrobatics of King Charles II. The K/CX blend compresses the disanalogy into an identity, transforming the Zemblan romance from an irrelevant fantasy-story to a *wish-fulfilling* fantasy, an expression of Kinbote's desire for acceptance and sexual freedom. His desperation in devising a kingdom where all the traits New Wye's inhabitants see as faults become virtues seems more pathetic (generative of pathos) than dangerous.

Here, then, is the K/CX blend's key impact on the combined-story blend of "the true story of John Shade" (JS-True). With the addition of Kinbote's K/CX blend, his absence from Shade's poem begins to fill roles (roles for absences) that Shade provides. References to people *like* Kinbote appear briefly in "Pale Fire," as examples of desperation in the face of certain death, who fantasize "Empires of rhyme, Indies of calculus" (602), and then die alone like "the exile, the old man / Dying in a motel" who "suffocates and conjures in two tongues / The nebulae dilating in his lungs" (615-6).[66] Shade's textual material re-enacts the exclusion that Kinbote feels from hetero-normative American society. In Shade's poem, the exile's last breath appears futile and unwitnessed, but Kinbote's "last breath" is his text, which includes an address to the reader's "you" (see *PF* 9, 21, 220). Kinbote the exile, whose "conjur[ing] in two tongues" puts

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as the "nymphet" (Meyer 218). See also Ramey (189, 206), Isaacs (324), and Reading (87, 91). More sympathetic readings counter by calling attention to Kinbote's status as social outcast, a recipient for exactly these kinds of hetero-normative judgments: see Belletto (759, 767), Miller (86), Glynn (86-7), Helen Oakley (485), and Tammi ("*Pale Fire*" 578).

[66] See also the odd IPH discussion of the soul's fate, where the draft manuscript replaces a reference to a madman (*PF* 181) with a reference to "beasts" ("PF" 629). The madman has been doubly excised from Shade's account: excised as marginalized homosexual identity, and excised even as "madman," and replaced with "beast."

himself on paper, lingers for the reader—and perhaps lives again.[67]

This concern for future reanimation is precisely the one Shade expresses in his recurrent waxwing metaphor: "I was the shadow of the waxwing slain / By the false azure in the windowpane; / I was the smudge of ashen fluff—and I / Lived on, flew on, in the reflected sky" ("PF" 1-4, *passim*).[68] Kinbote and Shade share a concern with the memory by which they will linger in their readers' minds. The reader has already conducted the story-level blend that provides her with Kinbote the possibly delusional commentator (K/CX), and has seen the future-self in Kinbote's addresses to his reader. Now she sees the same self-attentive address, in Shade's "Give me now / your full attention" ("PF" 697-8), juxtaposed directly with Kinbote's sudden slide into the autodiegetic "I" of King Charles II (in his notes to this very section).

For the attentive reader (or the second- or third-time reader), this juxtaposition may occasion a change in the sense of what Kinbote's and Shade's stories share (i.e., the JS-True blend's generic space). If Kinbote and Shade share a direct address to the reader, and a self-centered concern over their reception, the generic space that began as "Narrative of John Shade's Life," and shifted to "self-obsessed man narrates the life of John Shade," now becomes a full rhetorical cognitive frame: "self-obsessed man narrates *his own* life with a veiled purpose." This frame includes, then:

a.) a role for a male autodiegetic narrator who generates a dual deixis, an "I-here-now" and an "I-there-then"

b.) a role for an addressee whom the voice aims to convince, namely an explicit "you" in

[67] This is not the place for a full treatment of Kinbote's subject-status in terms of political theories of "exile"; Raskolnikov's Althusserian approach to *Pnin* suggests one possible avenue (see Raskolnikov 156); Zoric sees the subject through an interesting combination of psychological and rhetorical analysis (see Zoric 187).
[68] See Isaacs for a different interpretation of these lines (321, 327).

the text that cannot be blended with any character (a "you" that contrasts with the one Shade assigns to Sybil, for example)

c.) a causal connection between narrator and the present textual artifact

d.) a role for some animating purpose, placed antecedent to the act of creation

e.) a "masking" purpose, put in place to hide the actual purpose

Blending theory construes the "generic space" sketched above not simply as a rhetorical situation embodied by the text (nor as a "genre," in spite of the unfortunate lexical coincidence), but rather as a cognitive frame generated by the reader on the basis of the text. It is not a situation in which direct communication occurs between narrator (or author) and reader; it is the method by which the reader builds story from the discourse.

In its first two iterations, this generic space helps the reader compose the JS-True blend, but when it changes, becoming the frame sketched above, it also completely reorganizes that blend. JS-True is at first a double-scope blend: the reader learns to pull framing structures (with roles and relationships) and individual story elements (characters and events to fulfill the roles and take up the relationships) selectively from both the JS on JS and K on JS stories. The generic space above has become almost too specific, however. Instead of drawing equally upon different stories (the sane poet versus the "madman" commentator) to create a shared "real" world, the reader may begin to see two self-obsessed men narrating their own lives. In blending terms, the "JS-True" blend begins to look less like a double-scope blend, and more like a mirror blend, where two different stories share the same organizing frame. The double-scope blend generates a combined story by reading Kinbote as a madman and Shade as an everyman (to

overstate only slightly).[69] The mirror blend, by contrast, reads Kinbote and Shade with an eye for moments of slippage, where the man's true intentions leak out from behind their rhetorical masks.[70] Both narrators write their masks onto the page; both must be similarly "read-past."

The present blending account of *Pale Fire* thus suggests that the shift from a double-scope shared-reality blend to a mirror "fallible intentional narrator" blend provides the valuable global insight, familiar to the novel's determined re-readers, that Shade and Kinbote have more or less the same motivations in writing, that they show the same strengths and weaknesses,[71] and that their textual presences adopt the same nigh-evangelical attitude toward the reader. In the intuition-based logic of cognitive blending, they are *somehow* the "same person," and the reader's mind therefore feels pressure to compose and elaborate the mirror blend with the goal of making useful this intuitive "sameness." One critical tendency has been to take the mirror blend to an extreme but logical conclusion, blending the characters to produce the single-author hypotheses that put Shade or Kinbote in charge of the entire novel; another has been to reassert the separateness of the two narrator-characters by way of a litany of distinct character traits.

c. Second-Order Story-Blends: The Question of Authorship

The double-scope blending process that produces the combined JS-True and K/CX accounts includes story elements in its "generic spaces." Both of the stories that combine to make JS-True (K on JS and JS on JS) concern the life of John Shade, and both stories in K/CX

[69] This is the angle Couturier emphasizes in his third "reading contract" (63); Reading seems to share his view (82).
[70] I use the term "mask" to refer to a fictional identity adopted by a narrator, and not to Phelan's sense of a narrator so reliable that s/he presents the author's views directly (see Phelan, "Estranging" 224).
[71] As Couturier puts it, "Each has his own kind of arrogance and irascibility, and his own little bundle of Strong Opinions, on trivial matters as well as serious ones" (63).

include Kinbote as their storyteller (K on K and K on CX). As the generic space for JS-True becomes more specific, however, it also begins to require a different composition. In composing a mirror blend, the reader assigns an autodiegetic narrating role to Kinbote in one input, and to Shade in the other, each with the corresponding doubled deictic personal pronoun, "I-now / I-then," and each with a causal connection to his text. That is to say, the new generic space demands that its inputs include expanded versions of K on K and JS on JS. The former becomes K/CX on K/CX (as a result of the K/CX blend), and includes those story elements from K on JS that expose Kinbote's commentary as a further attempt to tell his *own* story, as well as the fact that Shade's poem (JS on JS) includes no reference to Kinbote. The other input, Shade's narrative (JS[K] on JS), now includes story elements deemed relevant and reliable after reading K on JS (the results of the JS-True blend), insofar as they influence Shade's account of his own life (for example, the details of Hazel's eclipsed subjectivity).

The shift in the combined-story blend—from double-scope to mirror—is subtle, but so powerful that the reader's entire interpretation of the novel will hinge on how she completes and elaborates it. So far, the present account of this blending activity has reached only the composition phase. The completion and elaboration phases will now explain the dramatic difference between the single-author and dual-author solutions.

Cognitive blending is a process flexible enough to produce drastically different outcomes, depending on how the textual material prompts the mind to carry out its composition phase, and also upon how the mind's preexisting configuration of mental spaces predisposes it to act. *Pale Fire* has already illustrated one prompting difference: In the K/CX combined-story double-scope blend, Kinbote's autodiegetic slips prompt the reader to compress Kinbote's "I" with King

Charles's "he" to produce a literal identity, in that both now refer to the same character. The disanalogies between Kinbote's life and King Charles's, however, compress into a fantasized identity that gives the reader the insight that "Kinbote has fabricated a wish-fulfilling past for himself." In the JS-True combined-story double-scope blend, by contrast, the commonalities between the juxtaposed discourses prompt the reader to combine story-levels, compressing Kinbote's "he" with John Shade's "I" to produce a third entity, a sense of John Shade as a "real" person antecedent to either his own or Kinbote's accounts. The K/CX blend thus reduces the number of available story levels, while the JS-True blend increases it.

The reader may complete the new mirror blend in either of these preceding ways. The K/CX blend already models the reduction option, and the instances of self-alienation or doubling that appear with some ubiquity throughout the novel serve as further prompts toward the identity-reduction blend. In addition to the K/CX blend, Kinbote also projects an alien "he" in Gradus, who then sees "Professor Kinbote" from the outside *as* King Charles II (*PF* 215). Within the K on CX account, the king sees himself reflected in a mountain pool—but then "his red-sweatered, red-capped doubleganger turned and vanished, whereas he, the observer, remained immobile" (*PF* 111). As Kinbote's "friend" Shade works on his poem, Kinbote "felt sure at last that he would recreate in a poem" his Zembla (*PF* 62); Kinbote wants to look into Shade's text and see himself, but—as with the King—the reflection vanishes, leaving only Shade's pedestrian American life staring back. Kinbote's K on K (past) strand also persistently and mysteriously alludes to Professor Vseslav Botkin, a Russian émigré whose name is also Kinbote's (*PF* 231).[72] At the end of his tale, Kinbote projects this doubled-self into the future,

[72] Boyd explores Botkin's presence at some length, and Wood allows himself to be convinced that "Botkin is the past Kinbote has peeled off" (179).

answering the question he assigns to his reader with a plethora of possible future selves:

> I shall continue to exist. I may assume other disguises, other forms, but I shall try to exist. I may turn up yet, on another campus, as an old, happy, healthy, heterosexual Russian, a writer in exile, sans fame, sans future, sans audience, sans anything but his art. [. . .] I may pander to the simple tastes of theatrical critics and cook up a stage play, an old-fashioned melodrama with three principals: a lunatic who intends to kill an imaginary king, another lunatic who imagines himself to be that king, and a distinguished old poet who stumbles by chance into the line of fire, and perishes in the clash between the two figments. Oh, I may do many things! (*PF* 229)

Alarmingly enough, Kinbote threatens to take on a role remarkably similar to Nabokov's, and then to perpetrate a work of art that re-echoes the entirety of *Pale Fire* itself on the stage (see also Wood 204-5, Isaacs 324). The determined reader may follow the textual clues about "Vseslav Botkin" (see *PF* 120) to the conclusion that "Kinbote" himself, as a Zemblan scholar of some repute, and also hoarder of secrets, is as false as "King Charles Xavier"—whose final name, the index reveals, is also "Vseslav."[73]

Completing the mirror blend according to the K/CX model, then, the reader will compress all of the autodiegetic-narrator roles into the secret, half-hidden character of Vseslav Botkin. This completion (call it "VB1," for Vseslav Botkin's single-authorship) thus assigns Botkin the causal connection to the entire text, and turns the stories of John Shade and Charles Kinbote into Botkin's narrative masks. To elaborate this blend, the reader will have to re-read all of *Pale Fire* with the usual transforming emphasis on the relationship between the discourse and

[73] Reading follows Stow in the hilarious speculation that Kinbote's projected future self includes ourselves as scholars of *Pale Fire*; she has it that Nabokov meant to make Kinbotes of his scholarly exegetes (see Reading 95; also Ramey 204-6).

the story-level blends (see Figure 8). Kinbote's account becomes in this reading ever more difficult to read across. If "Kinbote" is a fabrication, it is possible to surmise that his claims of transgressive sexual activity represent fantasies for Botkin,[74] just as Charles's more flamboyant behavior in Zembla constitutes a fantasy for Kinbote. Readers may wonder why Botkin inflicts upon himself the despair Kinbote endures in finding no Zembla in "Pale Fire" (see e.g. *PF* 62), but Kinbote does want to impress his readers with his own misery (see *PF* 229). If, as suggested above, the text of "Pale Fire" re-enacts Kinbote's exclusion, and if, as suggested by the second-order blend (VB1), Botkin stages this re-enactment, then the sum-total gesture of *Pale Fire* is a representation of Botkin's own desperate, lonely state. Botkin devises John Shade to show the reader how he, Botkin, has suffered at the hands of such hetero-normative academics.

On the other hand, John Shade also divides himself, and these self-divisions may prompt the reader to perform the same reduction in the other direction. Shade doubles himself in his suggestion of a mirror-world posthumous self, in his waxwing metaphor; in his account of a dream of a disembodied experience ("PF" 874-85); and in a reference to a potential future biographer ("PF" 887-9). Most remarkable, though, is the moment when he interrupts a description of shaving and inserts a two-line stanza: "*Man's life as commentary to abstruse / Unfinished poem.* Note for further use" ("PF" 939-40, italics in original). What appears to be a musing on the state of "Man," which is how Kinbote annotates the lines (*PF* 207), may of course also be read as the preparation to concoct the story of "a man"—namely Kinbote himself.[75] The quotidian existence Shade has granted himself in his poem (see "PF" 970) mirrors the fantastical

[74] Wood has suggested as much (184), in spite of his final rejection of the "Botkin" single-author solution (189). Couturier refuses to consider this solution at all (59), and Tammi remains agnostic, arguing that we know too little about Botkin (*Problems* 201).
[75] See also Hennard (309).

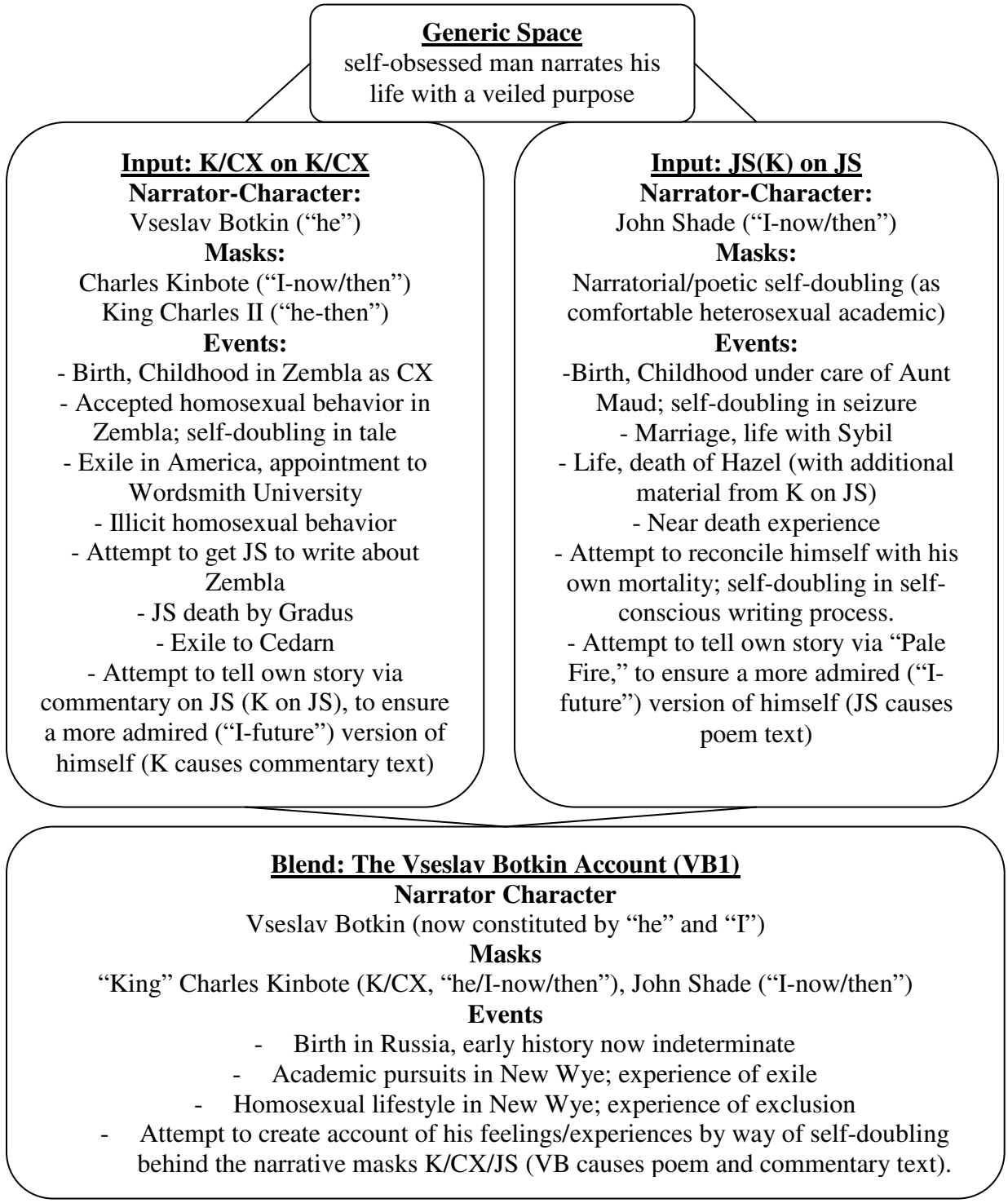

Figure 8. The second-order Vseslav Botkin single-author blend (VB1).

existence he will attain in Kinbote's commentary. Just as the reader can read every self-reference as a reference to the character Vseslav Botkin, she can also read every self-reference as a reference to John Shade, creating a second version of the blend, "JS1" (see Figure 9). Just as the outsider Botkin needs a comfortable heterosexual academic to throw a tragic light on his experiences as exile, John Shade the comfortable heterosexual academic needs the mad homosexual Botkin/Kinbote (not to mention Grey/Gradus) to give existential drama to his placid life in New Wye—much as Miller suggests in his discursive analysis of the novel *après* Sedgwick. Indeed, Kinbote fulfills enough clichés about homosexual behavior to suggest that he may indeed be the creation of someone in Shade's sociocultural position. Shade may even base the Kinbote character on Botkin, who might be a colleague at Wordsmith (see *PF* 120).

My point here is that the cognitive structure prompted by the previous blends causes and justifies the cognitive moves that create the manifold descriptions and defenses of the two single-author solutions. When the reader gets far enough into the text to compose the JS-True and K/CX story-level blends, she begins to read not for a direct-story blend that produces one story from one discourse, but rather a "megablend" of story-levels that allows her to see past the unreliabilities and distortions of competing narratives.[76] As demonstrated above, these blends force a re-reading of some fundamental elements of narrative discourse, namely the pronouns, proper nouns, and verb tenses that signify presence and person-hood. The John Shade of the JS-True blend is not a real person who preexists his own or Kinbote's account. He is a blend of the

[76] This configuration suggests a potential Bakhtinian reading of the novel's overall rhetorical gesture, namely as an effort to present heteroglossia directly (see Bakhtin 47, 61, 76). Tammi argues that Nabokov consciously resists such polyphonic techniques (*Problems* 98), but he also ascribes the Nabokovian "voice" to the implied author (particularly in *PF*; see *Problems* 100, 221), a move that makes it hard for me to tell how a "polyvocal" novel might differ from *PF*, if not other novels in Nabokov's corpus.

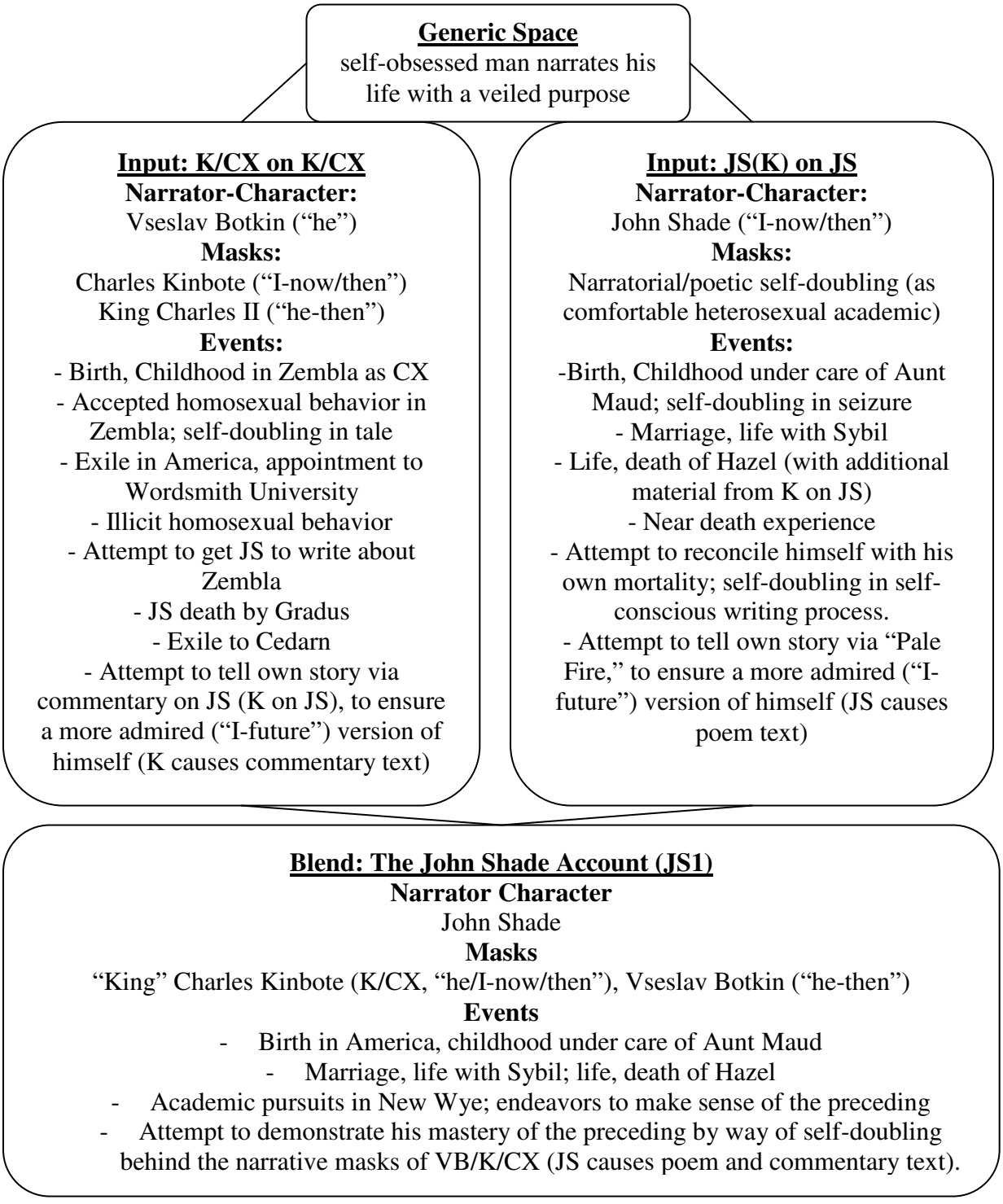

Figure 9. The second-order John Shade Single-Author Blend (JS1)

story-level characters that the reader creates from these two discourses. This recursive process licenses the second-order blending activities that can produce the VB1 and JS1 versions of *Pale Fire*, which in turn inspire the search for further textual details that support them. The novel always rewards detail-searches, producing mirror after mirror, patterns that tie the text together along the twinned inputs of the mirror blend at a million suture-points. The single-author solutions cannot be opposed on the grounds of character alone because the blending process has already demonstrated that character in *Pale Fire* is subject to revision.

In addition to the two single-author solutions—neither of which can invalidate the other—the reader can also follow an alternative blending strategy, modeled on the JS-True world-building blend. Instead of compressing autodiegetic narrators to create a single story-level character-identity (as the K/CX blend does), the reader can complete the mirror-blend to produce a story-world reality to which both inputs (K/CX on K/CX and JS[K] on JS) refer.[77] Where the JS-True blend made this process seem straightforward, however, the full mirror-blend creates a disturbing ambiguity. With regard to the story of the "life of John Shade," the dimensions of Kinbote's unreliability remain clear. If the point in both inputs—the role for what the text is an "account of"—is "his own life" however, reality becomes a matter of whose perspective the reader decides to adopt. John Shade looks upon the "topsy-turvical coincidence" ("PF" 809) of his life and finds it reassuring because he can portray it so eloquently in his poetry. His poem produces for the reader the peace that he feels with regard to the events of his life. He finishes the poem as "reasonably sure" about persistence after death as he is that he "Shall wake at six

[77] Couturier takes a step in this direction when he suggests the necessity of seeing past all of the novel's indeterminacies and into the author's intent (64).

tomorrow" (959, 960)[78]—but in an oft-noted irony, he does not in fact live through the night.[79]

Kinbote, by contrast, looks upon these same events and existents, and finds instead of random coincidence a precise design. He sees in Hazel's record of the spirit's signals in the old barn a tempting sketch of the circumstances that surround Shade's death,[80] a supernatural warning about a death that could have been averted.[81] Kinbote imputes everything to some divine plan, in spite of the anxiety such a plan sometimes causes him. His view of his own life echoes this fatalism, as he struggles to justify himself over and against a social world that rejects him. Where Shade is prepared to write into his poetry the natural world's randomness (and thereby order it), Kinbote wants to use his commentary to *rewrite* the social world's anguish-bringing design.

Shade, then, takes comfort from his literary portrayal of life's unpredictable vicissitudes, even though his complacency renders him blind to certain aspects of the felt life of others around him. Kinbote seeks comfort in certainty, even when the certainty is dire and the best he can manage against it is fantasy. Aligning their accounts according to the roles and relationships within the generic space ("self-obsessed man narrates his life with a veiled purpose"), the reader can complete the blend by positing a world to which both the fantasy-prone Kinbote/Botkin (of the K/CX blend) and the pragmatic Shade (of the JS-True blend) refer. Such a world would

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[78] Shade's logic is rather too convoluted to detail here; in short, he first finds a near-death vision (707) confirmed by another's experience (758, 763-4), but then finds the confirmation a rather laughable error (802), and then finds meaning in this laughable coincidence (809).

[79] See for example Belletto (767); Meyer (218); Boyd (182).

[80] The enigmatic syllables (*PF* 146) seem to be correctly interpreted by a series of critics beginning with Nabokov himself (see Boyd 202; Couturier 70) as referencing the title "Pale Fire," Judge Goldsworth, and something about a "tale told" that may refer either to Shade's poem or Kinbote's Zemblan fantasy—and of course a reference to the butterfly that flits past in the final moments of Shade's life. Kinbote's regular perceptual reliability encourages the reader to accept these details at face value.

[81] According to this reading, the advising spirit is Aunt Maud. Shade establishes her speech impediment himself ("PF" 200-208), and Kinbote remarks naively on the spirit's impediment (*PF* 146).

include all of the existents and events that they share, but not the legible causality that either narrative would grant it.[82] I will call this blend the "Dually Narrated World" (DNW henceforth; see Figure 10).

The final versions of the DNW blend in *Pale Fire* produce a different causal story depending on whose world-view the reader decides to adopt.[83] Making causal connections among many important events seems to require a choice between John Shade's pragmatism (wherein people survive death only in literature),[84] and Kinbote/Botkin's spiritualism (where "the plan" can be detected by the sensitive). The novel's world presents Shade's death as either a meaningless coincidence or a clearly legible (and therefore avoidable) causal sequence (even a figurative one, if Gradus represents the oncoming death foreseen by Hazel).[85] Likewise, it presents Kinbote's intrusion upon Shade's poem as either a parasitical disaster or a testimony to an exile's life, alternatives that lead to very different ethical or sociopolitical interpretations of the novel's artistic gesture. A conclusion that strives to accept *both* of their perspectives seems therefore an ironic limiting case. Kinbote and Shade cannot both be right, but they can both be *wrong*, and their world may confine itself *neither* to chance (or an unknowable plan), *nor* to a

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[82] This is what Lodge senses when he asserts that Nabokov's work is metonymic, not metaphoric (Lodge 155-7; see also Glynn 33). Indeed, this clash of world-views is probably the only binary opposition that the novel does *not* explicitly destabilize (see Miller 83). The clash leads Couturier to step directly outside the text itself, characterizing the novel as a metatextual exercise by an author bent on controlling his readers (66; see also Larmour 4; Wood 189).

[83] Oakley also calls Shade an "agnostic" and Kinbote a deist (489). Alternatively, Glynn identifies the competing worldviews as the competing epistemologies of formalism and symbolism (Glynn 90-91); and Reading traces the epistemic clash to Malcolm's *New Yorker* article, where that critic sees the "opposing poles of an artistic sensibility" (Malcolm 174-5, qtd. in Reading 88).

[84] This is the drift of the poem's final canto (see in particular "PF" 949-56). Tammi suggests that to oppose Kinbote is also to oppose art's ability to make human life meaningful ("*Pale Fire*" 584), but he elsewhere admits that Shade and Kinbote share this belief (*Problems* 20, 220-221).

[85] The idea of death as a "Gradus" figure, with a "precognized" time of departure and arrival is thoroughly Kinbote's. Conceived this way, death also figures prominently in Fauconnier and Turner's account of cognitive blending, where "death the grim reaper" is a favored example of a blended concept that assigns causal agency to an event that may not involve agents at all (see Turner 77-80; F&T 291).

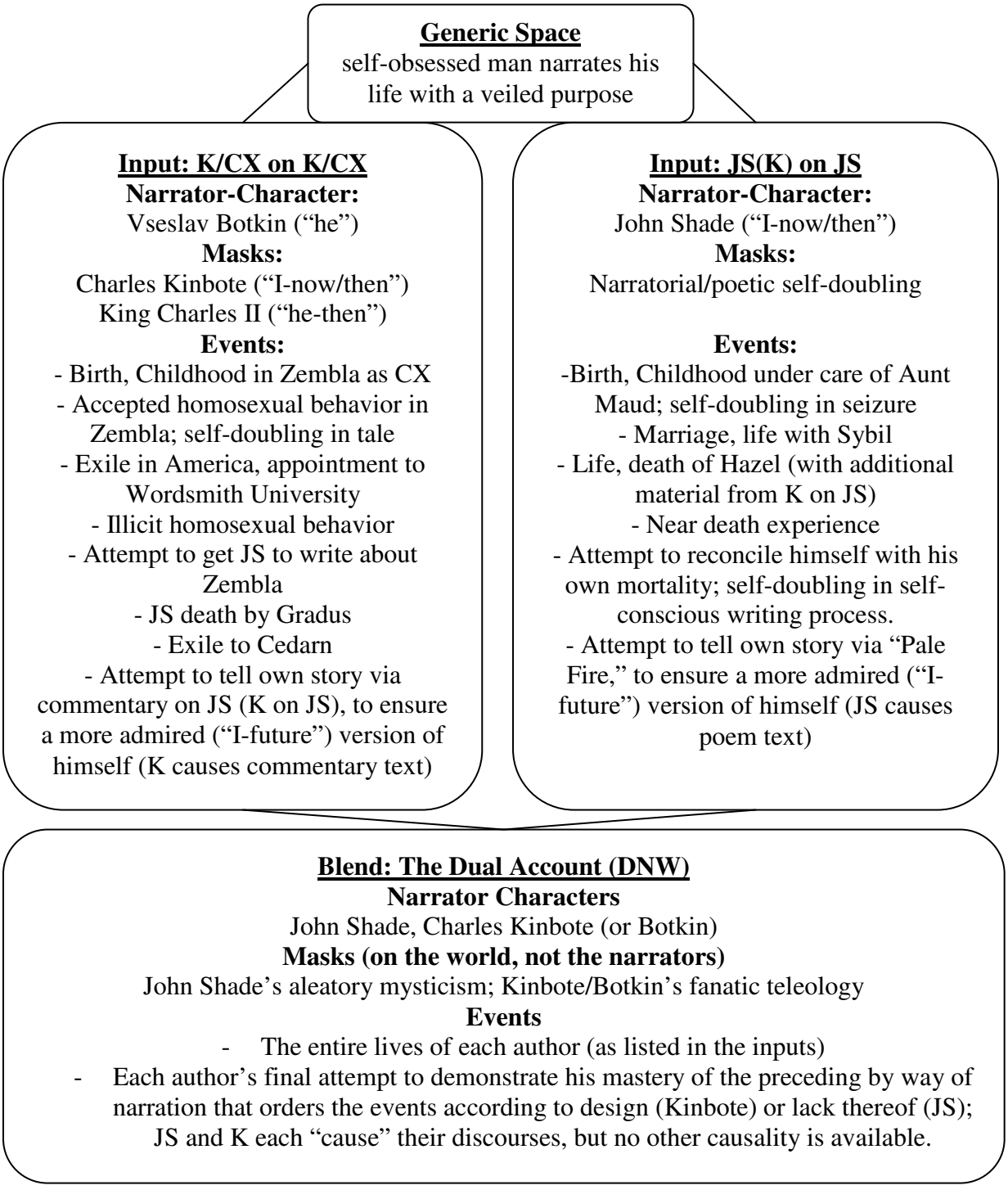

Figure 10. The dually-narrated world blend (DNW).

(knowable) divine agency.[86] But to specify that world any further—to make of it a *story-world*, and not a list of existents—is to read the text according to one of the two contending viewpoints.

The DNW blend does confer one final advantage, a humorous irony: there remains only a single empirical author to *Pale Fire* the novel, and in *our* world Kinbote's question has an answer. "But who instilled [pity] in us [. . .]? Who is the Judge of life and the Designer of death?" (173) Why, Vladimir Nabokov, of course. The mirror-blend's generic space may finally lose its specific genitive "his": "self-obsessed man narrates *life* with a veiled purpose." The DNW blend may eventually also combine Shade and Kinbote, producing (instead of a story-world author) something resembling the "implied author" of Wayne Booth or Seymour Chatman. This doubled and redoubled "I," assembled out of all the novel's narrative gestures, suits well the powerful analogies and disanalogies highlighted in the DNW blend,[87] but is ultimately no help to the moral predicament sketched at this chapter's outset. The trouble is precisely what Nabokov might mean by so "instilling" life into these characters; how to read *Kinbote's* (and Shade's) discourse is the trouble bedeviling the reader of Nabokov's novel. The present study's scope does not extend to the general notion of the implied author, but the fact that *Pale Fire*'s second-order story-level blend makes available a cognitive concept of that author's function verifies to some extent the explanatory power of the blending process.

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[86] Pier suggests a particularly hilarious version of this conclusion. While Shade fancies himself an appreciator of the aleatory web, his attempt to construe his worldview as an insight makes him a Kinbotian visionary; and while Kinbote fancies himself a piercer of veils, his writing practice presents a precisely Shadean web of associative logic and happenstance (see "Between" para 35; see also Tammi, "*Pale Fire*" 577). Brian McHale also seems to be correct in that it may be wrong to try to adopt exclusively either Shade's or Kinbote's worldview.

[87] Couturier proposes a solution much like this one, but in different terms (64). Isaacs goes straight to Nabokov from the beginning (see Isaacs 324). While blending analysis does not preclude a blending chart that would include the DNW blend on one side and the life of Vladimir Nabokov on the other, such an analysis would step outside the problem of story and discourse and into an interpretive speculation (a combined thematic-synthetic reading, in Phelan's terms) that lies beyond the scope of the present chapter (which confines itself primarily to the mimetic story-world).

Conclusion

In order to demonstrate the value of blending theory in analyzing story and discourse in formally complex narratives, this chapter has shown how *Pale Fire* prompts the reader to engage in a complex, recursive story-building process. Specifically, *Pale Fire* prompts for the transition from the double-scope JS-True blend to the second-order mirror blend that gives rise to the irreducible variety of possible story-worlds (VB1, JS1, DNW in two completions). The choice between the single-author and dual-author solutions depends on whether the reader chooses to complete this blend reductively (following the K/CX model to the single-author conclusions) or to return to the model that produces a blended story-world reality (following the JS-True model to DNW).[88] This variety of possible completions can be fully explained by the cognitive processes that produce story from discourse, and need not recruit extensively from Nabokov's biography or the novel's vast range of intertextual (as opposed to intratextual) allusions.[89]

The choice between blends is, however, one that the text requires the reader to make in order to be able to make further interpretive statements about the novel. In attempting to address the ethical dilemma posed by the text, some readers will feel justified in taking one extreme measure, and making one of the narrators fully responsible for everything that happens, up to and including the final gesture of self-commentary (whether by Botkin or Shade), and thereby construing the whole text as a desperate exercise in hubris. It also requires an extraordinarily paranoid reading strategy. Other readers, however, will feel equally justified in taking different extreme measure, and disavowing an independent reality by which to judge "Kinbote" (or

[88] I do not here use the term "reductive" pejoratively, as Tammi and others might (see *Problems* 203).
[89] A more comprehensive blending study might explore this associative constellation in more depth, particularly relating the mirror blends to the narrative frames of some of the major intertextual allusions, including *Timon of Athens*, *Hamlet*, and Goethe's *Erlkönig*—not to mention parallels or contrasts with Nabokov's other novels.

Botkin) and Shade's accounts, and concluding that they somehow live within one story-level world, but that it remains epistemically unavailable.[90] This interpretation makes *Pale Fire* an exercise in what McHale calls "negative capability," and what Dorothy Hale calls an encounter with a stubborn but thereby instructive alterity.

The final formulation of the DNW blend already suggests, however, a unique alternative to such a suspension between possible blends. The present chapter concludes by placing *Pale Fire* in familiar postmodernist terrain, that of the "neither/nor," the ironized ontological plurality between differing perspectives. But the alignment of *Pale Fire*'s poles and the blending process that produces them suggests that there may be a narrative means of avoiding a "neither/nor" conclusion without excluding one perspective.[91] As Fauconnier and Turner point out, "Often the point of the blend is not to obscure incompatibilities but, in a fashion, to have at once something and its opposite" (29). If narrative discourse prompts for a blend that produces story, and if it can also prompt for second-order blends of stories, then it can make available the "both" conclusion as a positive affirmation instead of a paradox, enabling readers to accept ethical, ontological, or sociopolitical contraries simultaneously, and producing a unique kind of fiction.

In the chapters ahead, this dissertation will argue that "both/and" is exactly the conclusion sought by the authors of the upcoming four novels. Writing forty or more years after Nabokov, they follow *Pale Fire*'s formal lead, using juxtaposed autodiegetic discourses or mixing media to prompt for a recursive blending process that produces incommensurable story-

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[90] Tammi might seem likely to take this view, given one of the guiding themes he imputes to Nabokov, namely a recurring invitation "to ponder the insidiousness of all real-seeming constructs" (*Problems* 76). Tammi's chapter on *Pale Fire* does not make this argument explicitly, however.

[91] Those who choose a Shadean version of the DNW blend may see *PF* as an "either/or" text that demands that the reader "recognize" how Kinbote/Botkin "perverts" Shade's text; I would argue that this version cannot exclude the alternate DNW or single-author blends except by critical fiat, and therefore begs the question.

worlds. Where *Pale Fire* stops short, however, they press on toward a story-world that can accommodate “both” poles of perspectives just as opposed as John Shade’s and Charles Kinbote’s.

II. We Are "I": The Singular and Plural Self in *Half Life*

Shelley Jackson's *Half Life* begins with a page that reproduces an official form, a medical "Release and Waiver" that states the intent of a Nora Gray Olney, born with one body and two heads, to sever her second head—her "sister" Blanche (3). This waiver establishes the novel's setting, an alternative United States in which nuclear testing has produced an entire subculture of people like Nora. This self-labeled "twofer" subculture has in Nora's world also received social recognition as a legitimate minority population. Like Jackson's earlier hypertext novel *Patchwork Girl*, *Half Life* asks to be read within the agonistic discourses of identity politics, as a narrator's account of her negotiations among a welter of social pressures.[1] Unlike *Patchwork Girl*, however, this novel has yet to garner a substantial body of criticism, in part because of its gleeful warping of both identity politics and autodiegetic narration. In the tradition of "unnatural narrative" sketched by Brian Richardson,[2] *Half Life* eschews stable retrospective narration, but the novel also refuses to plunge into a sea of competing present-tense discourses. It keeps itself on the borders between closure and radical openness, between realism (of a sort) and experimentation. In this chapter I will argue along two distinct but related lines. First, I will argue that conventional narratological terms can produce only negative conclusions about the kind of story that *HL* tells. Second, I will argue that the blending-model of narrative reading sketched in the preceding chapter allows a positive conclusion, namely that Jackson designs the

[1] For more on this thematic approach, see Pöhlmann's article and reviews by Benedetti (para 16) and Fong (para 3). Criticism on *Patchwork Girl* also treats that novel as a critique of authorial filiations (Sánchez-Palencia and Almagro (120); of binary gender concepts (Dobson and Luce-Kapler 271); of conceptions of a stable (masculine or heteronormative) subject (Keep para 9; Shackelford 65); and of masculinist readerly mastery (McClellan 106). Keep associates *PG* with both postmodernism and a version of "the gothic," as does Smith, and Sánchez-Palencia and Almagro (126) and Shackelford (74) even mention Butler's earlier work in association with Jackson's project.
[2] See his *Unnatural Voices*.

novel's complex form to suggest how ethics can survive a conception of self that rejects a foundational singularity.[3] Jackson emphasizes the plurality that underlies all formulations of the narrative "I," and suggests that Nora's "extraordinary embodiment"[4] causes such fascination because its form calls attention to problems with the notion of "self." Nora's account offers a way to rebuild the "person" concept so that it can *both* acknowledge a plurality of "selves"[5] *and* accept the social demand for singularity and responsibility. It is this simultaneous narrative endorsement of singularity and multiplicity, an "I" and a "we" at the heart of self-narration, that makes this novel so remarkable.

The Unity Foundation waiver prompts loaded questions about Nora's identity, which the subsequent 338 pages of autodiegetic narration try and fail to answer. She begins in a narrative mode, describing her discovery of Blanche's gradual reawakening, and her own increasingly desperate attempts to escape. She tries various forms of therapy and avoidance, but eventually abandons San Francisco to seek the Unity Foundation's surgical solution in England. In the course of her travels she begins to suffer hallucinations, which she blames on Blanche, and then, in the Foundation's underground facility, she realizes that Blanche has been plotting to remove Nora's head too. This discovery, and also the subsequent act of giving this account of herself, undo the narrator's certainty about herself and her twin sister, at which point the novel shifts in

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[3] Butler might call this its "substitutability," its paradoxical (deictic) ability to signify individuation and uniqueness at the same time as absolute interchangeability (31-33).

[4] Myser and Clark use terms such as "extraordinary embodiment," "concorporeal [*sic*] embodiment," and "extraordinary physicality" (46, 62) to describe the much-publicized Holton twins, conjoined twins whom Jackson herself mentions on her website as inspirations for some of the material in *HL*. Hosey also uses "extraordinary physicality" in her work on the textual portrayal of disability (38). See also Spinks's work on the differences between pre-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conceptions of "the monstrous," particularly as regards conjoined twins.

[5] The plurality considered here should not be conflated with the psychoanalytic (and particularly Freudian) plurality of hierarchialized zones of (un)consciousness, but rather construed as a multiplicity of narratives that might be used to give an account of a self. Jackson pursues the social friction that results from inadequate narratability, and not a "pathological" definition for some kinds of narratability. For further discussion see Hardcastle (Chapter 2).

form. The narrator reveals that she has kept a diary as she wrote the preceding narrative section, and its entries reveal a fragmenting sense of self. Not far into this diary, the "I" peels apart, fracturing along lines familiar to narrative theory: There is an "I" who narrates, and an "I" being narrated (the actor of the narrative being told), a difference of deictic center;[6] there is an "I" of the different temporal periods being narrated, such as the "I" of recent memories and the "I" acting in reconstructions of childhood events;[7] and there is an address, an "I" who collects and footnotes narrative, diary and waiver, and eventually also narrates as well. In reading the diary section in Part Three, the reader becomes unable to connect all of these "I" instances into a coherent subject position, and finds it no longer clear which of the narrator's two heads is and has been narrating.[8] In the book's final section, narration continues in an ambiguous first-person, as the twinned protagonists return to their family's home in Nevada, and rediscover the origins of their troubles in a family tragedy that one of the twin heads attempted to blame on the other. One twin, they realize, tried to punish the other with an act of physical abuse. Here the moral problem returns redoubled: the self-abusive act carried out by "Nora/Blanche" is also an effort of internalized self-oppression, an attempt to take on *too much* blame for the family tragedy and for their own extraordinary embodiment.

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[6] These correspond well to Genette's distinction between the narration and the narrated (27); it is also a sentiment that Butler echoes: "The narrative 'I' effectively adds to the story every time it tries to speak, since the 'I' appears again as the narrative perspective, and this addition cannot be fully narrated at the moment in which it provides the perspectival anchor for the narration in question" (40).

[7] This split should be familiar from the work of Paul Ricoeur, as well as Bakhtin, for whom, as Erdinast-Vulcan points out, "The 'speaking subject (the agent of the speech-act [. . .]) and the 'spoken' subject (the grammatical subject of the utterance) can never coincide" (6).

[8] This kind of uncertainty distinguishes *HL* from cases where the narrator simply breaks the unspoken rules of autodiegetic narration. There are isolated instances of what Heinze (following Ryan) calls "paralepses," but most of these either turn out to fall into Heinze's "global paralepsis," i.e., naturalizable to *HL*'s alternate world (what Yacobi calls "existential" naturalization); see Heinze (284-6).

Nora's narrative directly address the identity problem of characterization,[9] the process whereby memories and experiences do or do not cohere to create a unique individual self—and also a key and longstanding aporia in moral philosophy. This problem concerns how and to what extent persons can be individuated, singled out as persistent entities associated with a socially agreed-upon set of physical attributes (embodiment) and recountable actions. On the one hand, selves are increasingly understood as plural amalgamations, collected into the individuated "I" and the physical body by social relationships and systems (including grammar). The self remains plural because it is created by encounters with otherness on a variety of levels, including face-to-face human interaction, normative behavioral expectations, and of course, efforts to narrate experience in the first person. On the other hand, some sense of an individuated self also seems necessary because many moral conceptions require some notion of individuated agency (in addition to larger structural agency) not only in order to create a meaningful sense of accountability or responsibility, but also because human beings need at least a minimally coherent individuation of self (and other as well) in order to function socially.[10]

HL puts the reader in a unique position, presenting the waiver as a *fait acompli*, and the subsequent narrative as Nora's "account of herself," but denying the reader the chance to speak to Nora face-to-faces (so to speak). As in the other novels considered here, the reader's decision

[9] Problems of identity can be divided into issues about recognizing persons in the world, re-identifying persons over time, and characterizing persons as unique individuals (see Hardcastle 17-18), a problem Jean-François Lyotard also associates with the act of naming (41). *Half Life* focuses on the third; the appearing and disappearing main character in Gaddis's *The Recognitions* might better address the second; and the portrayal of extraterrestrials in Octavia Butler's Xenogenesis trilogy might best address the first.

[10] It is of course possible to assert that no person should ever be asked to conform to expectations of coherence and consistency, but ethical systems based on such assertions risk making ideological assumptions (that such "freedom" would create a beneficent or even livable daily reality, for instance), or at least being unable to provide usable moral guidance. I do not want to get drawn too deeply into this argument; Butler presents it as a choice between an "ethics of conviction" founded in the individual self, and an "ethics of responsibility," founded in the socially contextualized self (see 108). Neither of these options can do away with a notion of "self," however, as an embodied person distinct from (if neither independent of, nor recognizable outside of) the ways we talk about it (i.e., discourse). For further discussion see also Chambers and Carver (44).

about "how to read" takes on social overtones, making the reading situation itself a scene of recognition. I therefore see in *HL*'s ability to construct a subject position that is both plural and singular a parallel with recent developments in the philosophy of identity. In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Judith Butler examines this very question.[11] She questions what has been called the Narrativity Thesis,[12] the idea that selves are what they are because of an act of self-narration. Butler asks, "Does the postulation of a subject who is not self-grounding, that is, whose conditions of emergence can never fully be accounted for, undermine the possibility of responsibility and, in particular, of giving an account of oneself?" (19). Butler answers that the subject's own plurality grounds ethical discourse, for in finding itself "opaque" to complete narration, the subject must acknowledge its formation in relations with others, and therefore also its obligations to them. She sees self-narration as necessarily unfinished, pluralized by the kind of act in which "I" try to put an embodied self into words, but also singled out, rendered singular, by the form and manner of that incompletion. It is not, she asserts, our unitary self-story that makes us singular, but rather the unique ways in which our means of storytelling has to turn out to be (and to be recognized as) self-contradictory, incomplete, or incoherent.[13] For Butler, responsibility becomes grounded in the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of self-

[11] I choose Butler for this analysis in part because she has been understood to argue for a thorough deconstruction of narrative self-presentation, and in this work addresses the aporetics of such a position in terms of what might better be termed "moral" theory than "ethics" (following Adorno's distinction between the terms). In literary studies, Butler's work has been more commonly employed in the deconstructive vein: see Claycomb's study of stage performance (106, 109); Taylor's account of Gertrude Stein's linguistic experimentation (38); and Wang's discussion of white postcolonial guilt (39, 43).

[12] For a more thorough discussion of this thesis, see Erdinast-Vulcan (1), Ricoeur (1: xi, 3), and especially Hardcastle (20, 23, and most of Chapter 3), among many others.

[13] As Butler puts it, "I can never provide an account of myself that both certain forms of morality and some models of mental health require, namely, that the self deliver itself in coherent narrative form. The 'I' is the moment of failure in every narrative effort to give an account of oneself" (79).

narration.[14] *HL* is so striking in part because this is the discursive form it will take: a failure that is a success.

Narratology already offers terms and systems for classifying narratives that "fail," but in this chapter I will argue that the blending-theory of narrative outlined in the previous chapter is the model best equipped to describe and offer ways to interpret what *HL* asks of its readers. The concept of autodiegetic narration, with its deictic centers divided between actions narrated, and acts of narration, can describe Nora's seeming singularity in Parts One and Two with some precision. She becomes a narrator whose access to (and therefore account of) the narrated world comes into question—an unreliable narrator. The reader may come to believe that she has an ulterior motive in narrating, or that she misses or forgets important details. In Part Three, the narrative glue that holds together the narrating instance of "I" and the narrated character identified with "I" comes apart, as the diary suggests not only that the narrating "I" may not have been the character it said it was, but also that the "I" of recent events may not be the same character as either that of the narration, *or* the one labeled "I" in childhood half-memories.[15] This situation stretches the term "unreliability" to the breaking point, but as Pöhlmann also points out, it too is familiar to readers of Beckett and Pynchon.[16]

Studies of narrative tend to argue that this kind of breakdown makes the narrator's

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[14] She puts this in conditional terms, suggesting that, "if it is precisely by virtue of one's relations to others that one is opaque to oneself, and if those relations to others are the venue for one's ethical responsibility, then it may well follow that it is precisely by virtue of the subject's opacity to itself that it incurs and sustains some of its most important ethical bonds" (20). There is some disagreement over whether her position in *Giving an Account* differs from her previous work. Magnus, working from the early German version of these Adorno lectures, argues for a distinctly ethical turn (see 82, 95,101) that gives the subject more agency; Chambers and Carver argue that such an emphasis has always been part of Butler's work on subjectivity (117-8). Both agree, however, that the turn to a moral/ethical vocabulary is a new way of formulating her theories (see even Chambers and Carver 96).

[15] See also Pöhlmann (para 6).

[16] See also, for example, Sontag's discussion of the diminishment of narrative in "modern" novels, including Beckett's (104). Abbott also makes the point that Beckett's *The Unnamable* has "a superabundance of personal deictics" that "cannot be naturalized and thus never loses its power to disturb the reader" (137); see also Serpell's work on Pynchon, below.

subjectivity radically "indeterminate" or "uncertain." This is Pöhlmann's conclusion, and it is recognizable from a number of theories of the "postmodern" self-questioning narrative.[17] The very negative form of these adjectives, however, marks the approaching limits of what narratology can say about the novel's form. It remains possible to *assert*, as I have done above, that the seeming disintegration of the narrating subject in the text actually allows the integration of a new kind of "self," but I argue that the blending-theory of narrative will be necessary in order to be able to *describe* clearly how this process works, and to *predict* what service it might render to further interpretive work connecting *HL* with the domains of identity theory (particularly in relation to gender and queer theory) and perhaps also (dis)ability studies.

In this chapter I will use the blending-theory of narrative to argue that *HL* recreates the plural-singular aporia in order to produce a kind of subjectivity that ventures beyond the negative conclusion (that it breaks narrative conventions and becomes *neither* singular *nor* plural) and articulates instead a positive conclusion: that it becomes *both* singular *and* plural. To describe fully the final result, I will need to reconsider each of the two modes of reading mentioned above. Parts One and Two of *HL* prompt the reader to create an individual narrator who gives a narrative account of her life. Here the autodiegetic narration encourages the reader to combine the "I" pronoun with a coherent sequence of events, an attitude toward those events, and an earnest attempt to narrate. This blending process produces a story-blend I call "Nora (Not) Alone." In *HL*'s Part Three, however, this same blending activity pries apart the narrator's self-

[17] The terms "uncertain" or "indeterminate" appear in almost every paragraph of Pöhlmann's article (see particularly para 17), and they also appear in several reviews (Fong para 2; Erasmo para 4). Pöhlmann follows Brian McHale's lead in construing these as salubrious for readers (see McHale 82). To these examples I would add several ingenious formulations: Richardson uses the term "unnatural narrative" to describe a lack of fit between expected narrative frames and actual texts. Abbott describes narratives with "egregious gaps" and has recently formulated a theory of the "cognitive sublime," which involves "a stubborn refusal to cohere or a permanent lack of key information" (132). Heinze also asserts that paralepsis calls into question "the alleged panopticism of authorial narratives but also [. . .] those critiques of these fictions that read them as panoptic" (292).

descriptions, suggesting that her individuating narration was in fact a desperate attempt to hold together a crumbling self-narrative. In this blend, which I call "Not Exactly Nora," the novel offers the reader several different ways to rebuild the story-world events, producing several similar but strikingly divergent possible stories.[18] The novel's final pages, however, encourage the reader see these possible stories as still, *somehow*, "the same story." This insight prompts for a second-order combined-story blend that integrates the possible stories according to a set of events—"Blanche/Nora's" traumatic experience, their excess arrogation of blame —that is not exactly narrated, but becomes *narratable* by the reader. This cognitive shift allows the text to achieve the "both/and" conclusion, a story-world I call "Trauma and Recovery." The present chapter will therefore proceed in sections appropriate to these blending activities:

1. The direct-story blend by which the reader produces the story of "Nora (Not) Alone."
2. The combined-story blend by which the reader's sense of Nora's coherence comes apart, producing multiple possible completions for "Not Exactly Nora."
3. The second-order combined-story blend by which the reader integrates the various completions of "Not Exactly Nora," to produce the singular-and-plural subject position in "Trauma and Recovery."

Half Life makes possible this dramatic cognitive story-building sequence by juxtaposing a variety of narrative genres, as well as several non-narrative graphical elements, creating a complex "layer cake" of narrative levels (see Figure 11). By the end of the book, the reader will

[18] Serpell calls this kind of ontologically-pluralized reading an "oscillation" between potential story-world configurations. As Serpell demonstrates, Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* produces a suspension akin to what I have sketched for *Pale Fire* in the previous chapter, an ontological unresolvability that produces radically different possible stories. Where *The Crying of Lot 49* ends in a stalemate between these possibilities, *HL* produces an integration of the seeming opposition.

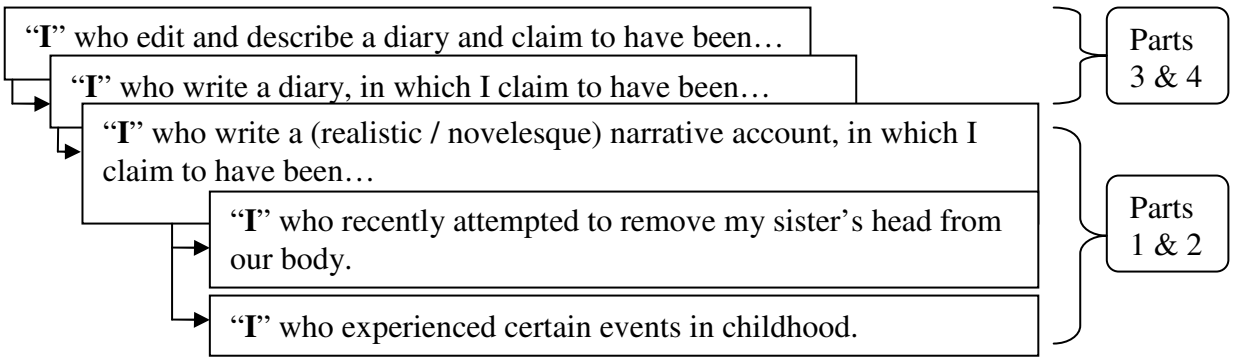

Figure 11. Narrative levels in *Half Life*

have created a structure where a narrating "I" edits a diary by an "I" who claims also to have written Parts One and Two, in which an "I-now" narrates the experiences of more than one "I-then," from more than one temporal past. The blending analysis will climb up through these layers, and for the sake of clarity, I will reproduce the diagram in Figure 11 at the beginning of each section, highlighting the layers under consideration. I want to stress, here, that while the novel consistently makes the process of combining "I" instances into narrators and characters difficult, the physical organization of the various juxtaposed discursive forms keeps the *levels* of narration discrete and clearly legible.

Direct-Story Blend: "Nora (Not) Alone"

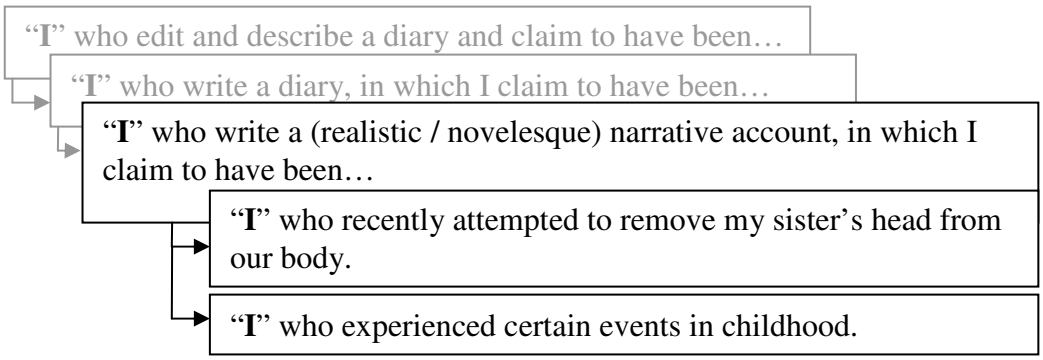

Figure 12. Narrative levels considered in the Nora (Not) Alone story

As sketched in the preceding chapter, the present blending-theory of narrative understands narrative reading as a set of simultaneous and mutually-influencing cognitive process. In reading printed text as narrative discourse, readers combine the graphical material on the page with the cognitive frame for recounting events, a mirror blend[19] that aligns visual information with expected syntactical constructs. This "parsing" blend produces and interprets the varieties of grammatical "person" familiar from conventional narratological accounts of discourse—extradiegetic, heterodiegetic, homodiegetic, autodiegetic—and in its completion and elaboration sets up the feedback loop that also generates story from discourse, a "direct story blend." This direct story blend is a single-scope blend that combines grammatical statements such as "I can tell you the exact moment I knew she was waking up" with the expected cognitive frame for narration. In the case of this example (set within *HL* Part One; see Figure 12), a distinction between personal and temporal deixis[20] creates a dual deictic center, producing a

[19] Again, see Appendices for brief definitions of blending-related terminology; see Chapter One for a more in-depth explanation of the "parsing" and "direct-story" blends.

[20] See Fludernik (Chapter 5) and Fleischman (216-20) for personal and temporal deixis, respectively, and also of course the work of Jesperson and Banfield who explore these deictic categories in depth. Abbott also suggests that a

blended entity, an autodiegetic narrator who is both narrator and character. From an "I-now" and an "I-then" the reader produces a blended concept of a character who also has causal connections to the discourse, and barring confusions, the reader will maintain identity connections between all such instances of the pronoun "I." This narrating-subject concept remains (like all subjects) the product of an integrative process that is always open to revision. Each new discourse element requires an adjustment to the concept—as in, for example, the sudden and delightful realization that the shambling Charles Kinbote literally claims to *be* King Charles II of Zembla, recasting a "he" as part of the "I," and also changing the ontological and epistemological status of that "he." The reader at that point knows for certain that King Charles is a fraud. It is at this direct-story level that *HL* gets interesting, so the present analysis will bypass the "parsing" blend in favor of the "direct story" blend.

Parts One and Two set up Nora as an autodiegetic narrator and as a singular "I." She confesses her attempt to surgically "fix" herself, telling a story that accepts the role accorded to her in the Unity waiver. By narrating, she tries to take responsibility for her intent to sever Blanche's seemingly comatose head from their shared body. Even though the narrated "I" (the character in the story being told) cannot always understand her experiences, the narrating "I" (the teller) is at least able to claim those experiences, as well as the affective responses of confusion and fear. For instance, as she describes suffering from disturbing sensory experiences she remarks, "Since I moved to San Francisco, I had not gone back to the desert even in dreams, and I had the uneasy feeling that the recent change was Blanche's doing" (52). Her narration prompts the reader to assemble the plurality of "I" instances into a subject at least coherent

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"crisis" of deixis can call attention to "the necessary dependence of personal pronouns on context to determine their reference" (137).

enough to narrate, even as sly grammatical clues indicate otherwise.[21]

Very much as in *Pale Fire*, these subtle doubts begin in the first pages, and quickly shift *HL*'s focus from the events narrated to the act of narration, a move Butler would also recognize. As she points out, "The 'I' is narrated but also posited and articulated within the context of the scene of address," and therefore with a rhetorical purpose: "I am doing something with this telling, acting on you in some way. And this telling is also doing something to me, acting on me, in ways that I may well not understand as I go" (Butler 51). This self-reflexive structure of telling is exactly what the blending-theory of narrative articulates: an ongoing process of revision by which the reader constructs and then revises his conception of Nora as narrator, as she also revises her own self-conception (I will use the male pronoun for this chapter, since so many of the principal textual entities are female). What is more, the subtle clues about Nora's imperfect coherence create the effect that Butler's formulation predicts. They emphasize the constructed nature not only of the narrative but also of the entity narrating it, and suggest that the narrator's way of understanding herself may not fit the autodiegetic narrative structure she uses. As a result, for the reader the "Nora" narrator becomes unreliable in some very specific ways, and for Nora, the lack of fit between perceived or remembered experience and narrative form will cause trouble with her narration. To understand this unreliability and this trouble, we will need to understand how the blend I call "Nora (Not) Alone" is completed and elaborated.

The process by which the reader produces Nora as coherent narrator-character is a direct-story blend that draws upon a total of four distinct inputs. The first is of course the cognitive

[21] Sánchez-Palencia and Almagro make a similar point about readerly activity in *Patchwork Girl* (121), and the fact that it also happens in *HL* weakens their argument that this is an effect specific to hypertext. For more on hypertext and interactivity, see Chapter Five of the present study.

frame for narration itself, with its constellation of narrator, existents, and events.[22] The second is the Unity Foundation waiver, which is not narrative but a filled-out form inserted into the novel that becomes subsumed under the narrative frame as soon as the reader recognizes the names "Nora" and "Blanche" on the first page of narrative. The third includes the portion of the discourse that chronicles Nora's recent experiences, events and existents that she remembers. The fourth includes her attempts to reconstruct childhood experiences, events and existents that she partly remembers, but partly reconstructs on the basis of more recent experiences. Each of these elements includes textual information that prompts for its inclusion in a direct-story blend, most notably names, verb tenses, and pronouns. The "I" appears over and over, as do the names "Nora" and "Blanche," and of course the pronoun "she."

Because it appears just after the title page, the Unity Foundation waiver is the reader's first encounter with the world of *HL* and its principle characters. It and the various other "artifacts" of Nora's experience aim for an "indexical" relationship to Nora's story, an indication that she was there and did the things she describes.[23] The waiver, however, also has a certain amount of narrativity.[24] It prompts the reader to reconstruct not only two person-like entities (Nora and Blanche) and one impersonal agency (the Unity Foundation), but also two distinct actions: somebody filled out the waiver, and somebody included it in the book. These events

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[22] I cannot give an exhaustive list of potential frame-configurations here, because so many configurations are possible. The important point is that the prototypical concept "narrator" entails a causal connection to the text as narrative discourse, and that within that discourse some existents participate in some events. In autodiegetic narration, the reader must undergo a heuristic feedback loop, continuously revising her sense of the narrator and the narration (see Chapter One). For typologies of the entities that can fill this role, see Richardson; Fludernik's work on reflectorization (36, 191-2, 372); and Chatman's and Genette's discussion of "point of view" and characterization (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 186-90; *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 152-3).

[23] In addition to their referential functions, in other words, they point toward the actions that ostensibly produced them. In addition to the waiver they also include various clippings on the subjects of twofers and Siamese twins, a drawing on a napkin (72), and a Shandy-esque diagram of the story itself (434).

[24] For example, it issues instructions in the second person, and contains printed statements in the first person, such as "I [. . .], being of sound mind and body, request the surgical removal of [. . .] my conjoined twin" (3).

await further narration, a more fully-articulated causal and referential connection with one another, and to their architect. Who is Nora, and when and why did she fill out the form? Was the surgery completed, and is Blanche no more? Was Nora right to seek such surgery? It is this quest for global insight that motivates the reader's first foray into Nora's narrative, his creation of a direct-story blend that constitutes Nora as narrator and character.[25] Because of the nature of the intent expressed, the waiver also establishes the ethical stakes of Nora's self-narration.

At the same time, however, the reading activity that creates "Nora"—that compresses the waiver's "I," the name "Nora," and the conceptual roles for an agent who filled out the waiver, and one who included it in the book—belongs wholly to the reader. As a legal form the waiver's apparent purpose is to render Nora's presence and intent legible in legal terms, but it depends for its coherence upon the understanding that the signature on the form matches the physical capabilities of Nora's writing hand, and also that the hand itself really is "Nora's." Given Nora's extraordinary connection to Blanche, these conclusions may not be available within the world in which the waiver exists. The waiver may, in its collection of simple blanks and circle-able alternatives, force its user to conform to expectations that do violence to the kind of person that user may be.[26] The concept of "user" for which the waiver prompts may not match the kind of person who uses it.[27]

Thus, in beginning to read the narrative, the reader has already begun generating the existents and events that will constitute the story he produces, but he has also begun on a footing

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[25] Erasmo notices this mood of self-disclosure in the novel, pointing out that *HL* is also "the story of a woman attempting to write her own life story" (para 6).

[26] The violence in question would be what Chambers and Carver call "normative violence," in Butler's account (she calls it a "certain ethical violence"), where expectations about the nature of subjectivity render some entities illegible as subjects (Chambers and Carver 76; Butler 42).

[27] Interestingly, Shackelford raises the same problem with discourse that figures readers of complex narratives as "users" in an instrumental sense, arguing that such discourse "has frequently relegated women and others deemed not adequately human to the position of object or tool" (65; see also 76).

that, whether or not he realizes it at this point, already calls into question the unifying activity his story-building carries out. The fusion between "I-now," "I-then," and "Nora" always remains tenuous, relying heavily upon the reader's willingness to blend the "I" into a single entity. In reading Nora as she who "knew [Blanche] was waking up," the reader also begins to construe the narration as an "account of the self," a confession that, in filling out the waiver, Nora expressed an intent to perpetrate an immoral act. She knows Blanche may have something to say, but she still checks the box that labels Blanche "*non compos mentis*" (3), which means that Nora can turn in only one waiver, silencing her twin. The reader thus creates the story world according to a familiar narrative frame, that of interpersonal conflict. In this frame, Nora fills one role by completing the waiver in an attempt to get rid of Blanche, who fills the opposing role as mutual "antagonist."[28] And yet, at the same time, Nora remains (apparently) the narrator, and throughout Parts One and Two Blanche never gets to speak.

Instead, Nora ascribes to Blanche all the things she (Nora) seems to have done but cannot remember doing. The character "Blanche" consists almost entirely of gaps in Nora's memory or ability to narrate. The early sentence in which Nora first describes her situation provides a useful example:

> Blanche is sleeping. She has been sleeping for fifteen years. [. . .] I can tell you the exact moment I knew she was waking up. But allow me a day's grace. Let me remember that last afternoon, unimportant in itself, wonderfully unimportant, when I was still Nora, just Nora, Nora Olney, Nora alone. (5)

Diction reinforces the narrating subject's coherence, for the "I-now" is she who "can tell," and

[28] The simple terminology of "antagonist" may seem out of synch with the cognitive blending model; I use it to emphasize the cognitive frame for "struggle against," and also to highlight the powerful normative force still exerted by the idea that there must be a "protagonist" and "antagonist."

who remembers an "exact moment," even if the "I-then" could not. Applying the conventional frame for autodiegetic narration, the reader will be able to group together "I-now," "I-then," and "Nora," and blend them with a role for "narrator-character," just as he built "John Shade" and "Charles Kinbote" in *Pale Fire*. Indeed, readers experienced in autodiegetic novels from *Tristram Shandy* to *Lolita* (to both of which Nora's account alludes),[29] have received explicit training in this reunification, recognizing the multitude of deictic situations associated with the "I" pronoun as "the same" person, namely the narrator-character. At the same time, however, the verb tenses undercut the clear connection between the narrating and narrated "I," already pointing the way toward future fragmentation. The "I-then" (narrated) *was* "Nora alone," but in some sense not yet clear, the "I-now" (narrating) is not. Not alone? Or not exactly "Nora"? Since the bulk of *HL*'s first two Parts maintains the narrating instance as a coherent subject, I call this first blend "Nora (Not) Alone."

To this conception of the waiver as Nora's illicit intent, and the narrative as Nora's effort to take responsibility for her actions, the reader has to add the alternating sections in which Nora tries to reconstruct her fragmentary memories of childhood in Too Bad, Nevada. Where she frames the account of her recent experiences as memory of factual events, she does not remember her childhood well, and has to reconstruct it out of family stories, vague perceptual recollections, and narratives that Nora has been telling herself for many years. She frames the act of narration as only partial recall: "what I do remember lacks heft" (7). She describes how her parents met as complete strangers on a long-distance bus-ride, and conceived her in an awkwardly public sexual encounter, mere miles from an above-ground nuclear test. At the end

[29] The novel's opening lines parallel Humbert's early musings over Lolita's name (see Jackson 5). Nora's story of her childhood also begins like Tristram's, with her own conception or, as she puts it "misconception" (10).

of the chapter, however, she carefully qualifies her account: "The bus could have been a train. My mother could have been wearing jeans, not a dress" (16). The text invites the reader to construct this conception-story's core as a "real" past event being recounted by a narrating character, but construes many details as possible embellishments, created in the (present) situation of narration. What follows is a story of isolation and struggle, as the two-headed child, Nora and Blanche, grow up in the single-family "town" of Too Bad, gradually learning how to live and move without immobilizing disagreements. In the process, Nora and Blanche develop distinct characteristics that prompt the reader to distinguish between them in more than name alone. Nora remembers herself as the spinner of tall tales, and Blanche as their ready believer (78), but when they go to school in nearby Grady, it is Blanche who becomes popular. Alone (together) in a world of "singletons," Nora internalizes the bitter identity as mutation or "freak," while Blanche does cat-drawings for other children, and begins to make friends (202).

Here, too, just as in the book's first page, the text continuously points out and then elides the precarious quality of these identifications. For instance, Nora describes an alarming trend in her early years: because she shares limbs and balance with Blanche, "I learned to keep track of Blanche's doings as if they were mine, and a new problem arose. I started thinking they *were* mine," and over time, "I caught myself becoming Blanche" (78). It is a sly piece of narration, for, as in the example of "I can remember [. . .]," it encourages the reader to align the "I" pronouns in both the (present) narrating situation and the (childhood) narrated situation with "Nora," simply because the "I" appears so often opposed to "she," to "Blanche." The narrator describes a blurring of boundaries between "I" and "she," but then reinforces a conception of that blurring as a problem, as well as a sense that the narrating "I" now has mastery over that

problem.[30] In the context of the ongoing blend, the statement "I started thinking they *were* mine" contradicts the meaning it denotes. It presents an uncertain cognitive situation (a problem attributing actions to separate agents) in terms of a certain cognitive situation, a retrospective narration of that very uncertainty.

This direct-story blend, this delicate webwork of connections between pronouns, names, and story-level existents, takes a single-scope form as the reader adapts waiver, recounted memories, and reconstructed childhood events to the cognitive frame for autodiegetic narration. The names on the waiver align easily with the character names in the events being narrated. The less specific agent-roles that signed the waiver and included it in the book also connect to the narrator, as the source of the narrative discourse. The generic space for this blend might be summarized, "Nora provides an account of her own and Blanche's experiences."[31] To complete the blend, the reader compresses numerous discourse elements into unique story-level characters and events, and grounds all of these in Nora's narration, which fuses memory, conjecture, and language to produce *HL*'s textual material. All deictic references to the "I-here-now" in all three inputs become references directly to the character-narrator. Nora's account of herself situates her as the left head of the twofer girl who grew up in Too Bad, the head who remained awake, who moved their shared body to San Francisco, who submitted the Unity Foundation waiver in an effort to have Blanche removed, and who returned to San Francisco and "now" writes about her experiences. Likewise, Blanche becomes a wholly narrated character, the conjoined twin

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[30] The "I-now" narrator sometimes doubts this, but the narrative mode she uses overrides those doubts through form alone. See also Erdinast-Vulcan's discussion of Bakhtin's early work on the reconstitution of he narrative subject through the act of narration (5).

[31] By so formulating the generic space, I take it that the waiver "provides an account" of an intent, in the sense that it could be produced as legal evidence of that intent. It is not so much an account of a "self" as of a legally binding intent on the part of whoever signs it. For a Foucauldian reading of further problems with this kind of disciplinary identification, see Chambers and Carver (76-8) and of course Butler (114).

also raised in Too Bad, but who somehow fell asleep fifteen years ago (5), and may now be waking up (see Figure 13). These key compressions allow the disparate discourse elements to compress into a coherent story-level that takes Nora and Blanche from conception to age twenty-eight.

Elaborating the "Nora (Not) Alone" blend allows the reader to reconstruct Nora's narrating acts, and produce the "struggle" between her and Blanche, but this process performs the same function as the check-box on the waiver: it silences Blanche. The other head becomes a repository for all of the things that remain opaque to Nora, culminating in a crucial example. Nora remembers going to meet Dr. Ozka, the Unity Foundation surgeon, but cannot seem to remember the meeting itself. She describes entering the doctor's office, and she describes leaving, but in between, instead of narrating, she inserts a blank line, and later assigns this gap to Blanche according to the same logic she has been using all along: because "I" do not remember the interview, "she" must own that experience. As she later discovers, the doctor decided to remove *Nora's* head after this interview, not Blanche's. Nora escapes, and discovers the original waiver—the one that begins *HL*—in her luggage back in San Francisco. She remarks "Nice one, Blanche" (335), thus solidifying a story structure around an omission. The gap might have been integrated into the story in many ways, including a purposeful elision by the narrator, but the storytelling logic that casts blank spaces as "Blanche's experience" confines the possibilities: Blanche must have seized control of their body.[32] On the basis of what Blanche said, Dr. Ozka

[32] Further examples of this kind of reasoning include episodes where their right arm hurls objects at random (68-9, and *passim*); uncertainty over her left hand's movement (84); apparent hallucinations of moving taxidermy animals and a skeletal two-headed baby (162, 189, 191, 227-36, 314, 327-30); a sudden fear of death (260); and childhood fears (298), sexual ambitions (308), and actions. The sexual encounter with Chris Marchpane alone could merit much attention in terms of sexuality and agency, but space is limited.

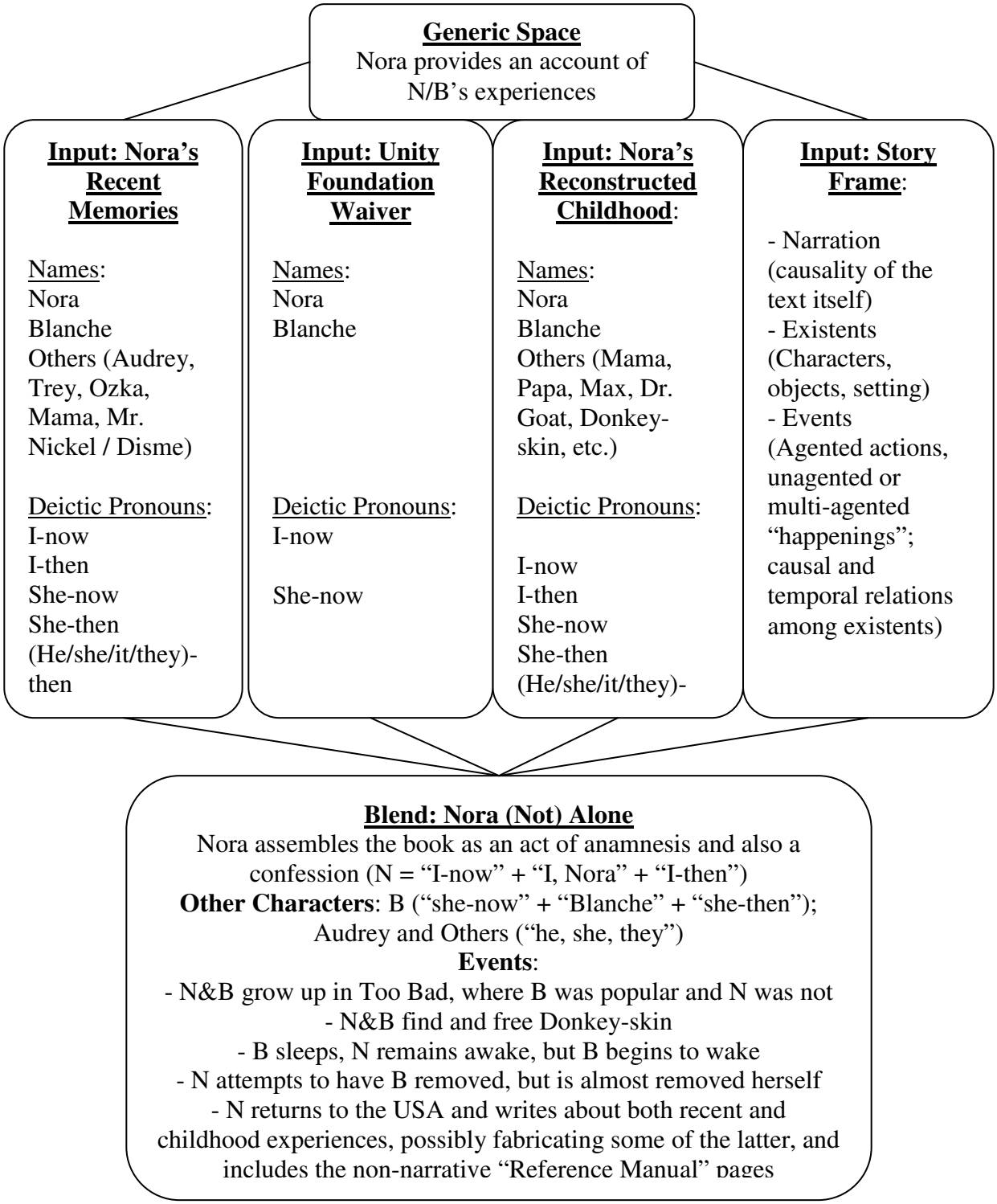

Figure 13. "Direct-story" blend for the Nora (Not) Alone story

decided to regard Nora as the problem to be surgically corrected. Blanche struck back.

Nora's habit of narration here inverts the very confession she appeared to want to make, ascribing murderous intent to Blanche instead of accepting responsibility for it herself (i.e., by narrating the intent in the first, rather than third person). The action being performed in Nora's narration produces the same result as the intent in the waiver, namely the composition (as a concatenation of empty spaces), silencing, and condemnation of Blanche. The "Nora (Not) Alone" blend begins by promising global insight into Nora's actions and intentions, but ends by affording a quite different global insight: that Nora herself has been narrating unreliably in multiple respects. She lacks information about her world, she has memories she does not understand, and she tends to assign both of these problems to Blanche's agency.[33] By the end of Part Two, the reader will have learned to read what the "I-now" says across the grain, to see the story about the struggle against Blanche as a way of reconstituting and *continuing* a struggle that may or may not have anything to do with their body's second head.

When it is simply a matter of a memory problem or an oversight, the reader can recuperate much of Nora's subjectivity and narrating coherence, making her "the one who can't remember" or "the one who overlooked something," but the attribution problem proves more troubling. The autodiegetic character "Nora" is a blend that does not precede the reader's encounter with her text, and as such, even if the narrator (Nora, I-now) misinterprets events, the reader's story-blend is capacious enough to adapt her (Nora's) subjectivity to this very attribute of mistakenness. In an early scene, noticed also by Pöhlmann, she attends a party with her friend Audrey, and witnesses what she takes to be an act of fellatio. When the stooped girl stands up,

[33] In the terms Phelan uses, her unreliability cuts across all three "axes of communication," including instances of misreporting, misinterpreting, and misregarding (see Phelan 224).

however, Nora's perception shifts, and she sees only abandoned coats on a bed. She rejects the cognitive frame for sexual activity in favor of one for resting or weeping, and then muses, "I had concocted a whole story out of a few folds of fur. (I should think more about this. We construct worlds this way, not piecemeal, but in one demiurgic surge. How many of them go uncorrected?)" (69).[34] It is another of Jackson's bravura performances, for although the statements recount worries about perceptual fallibility, the words themselves reinforce the narrator's coherence by narrating in the past tense, "I had concocted," and by posing future tasks for contemplation, "I should think [. . .]." More precisely, these statements prompt the reader to reinforce his identity-connections, repeating the blend that compresses the narrating "I" with the narrated "I," giving "Nora" all the more coherence because of her self-attribution of doubt.[35] When the narrator has trouble deciding which head owns which mental state, however, she calls into question precisely her own ability to make adequate (in the ethical sense, as well as that of accuracy) attributions regarding herself and what she calls "Blanche."[36] Such a construction of the narrator's gesture clarifies the Venn diagrams that open these two parts. Part One begins with "NOT," a configuration that matches the narrator's struggle to give an account of herself as distinct from "Blanche." Part Two begins with "XOR," the "either/or" formulation: either one or the other, but not both.

The concern over the narrator's ability to narrate should recall the initial blending activity by which the reader constitutes a concept for an existent (a character or person) on the basis of

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[34] Pöhlmann also goes on to make the connection to Oedipa Maas's hesitant worry, "Shall I project a world?" in *The Crying of Lot 49*.

[35] The reference to Descartes's *cogito* is intentional, for the discourse of self-identity through conflation of mental and ontological predicates (*I doubt*, *I think*, *I am*) is precisely the habit Jackson and Butler both attack; for further discussion see Chambers and Carver (37) and Hardcastle (Chapter 1).

[36] De Nooy and Statham's work on the filmic portrayal of female twins also highlights the artificiality of divisions into "good girl / bad girl" binaries (para 5).

the completed Unity Foundation waiver. Someone wrote in the name "Nora," and that writing act connects pronouns with names, but the (indexical) connection between these signs and their putative writer remains tenuous to the exact same extent that the form asserts its legally binding qualities: insofar as it relates the pronouns and names to the embodied individual. The same problem now applies, just as Butler would also argue, to the act of narration in Parts One and Two. The narrator attempts to give an account of herself, but in so doing has to use the narrative frames available for autodiegetic narration, particularly the "I" pronoun. In the process of converting memory and experience into language, however, she continually encounters attribution problems and gaps that make a coherent account impossible. Her account fails to clarify her (or Blanche's) responsibility[37] because it fails to connect the pronouns "I" and "she" unambiguously to the names "Nora" and "Blanche," and to the series of events in which they participate. In other words, her account does not fail because *she* is "unreliable" or "incoherent," but rather because the narration itself cannot "make legible" (in Butler's terms) the extra-ordinary subjectivity of Nora and Blanche, which may not be amenable to singular pronouns at all. In what sense can story itself persist without a coherent "I"? How can anyone assign "Nora" or "Blanche" responsibility for any action? And what can the Unity waiver now signify? These are the questions that the novel's Part Three explores, and not surprisingly, the section begins with the Venn diagram for "OR" (the full diagram set; anything goes), suggesting the confusing array of possible versions of Nora's and Blanche's problematic personal histories.

[37] She voices this fear early on, suggesting that her narrative may be "just another way of saying no" (43) to demands that she give an account of herself.

Combined-Story Blend: "Not Exactly Nora"

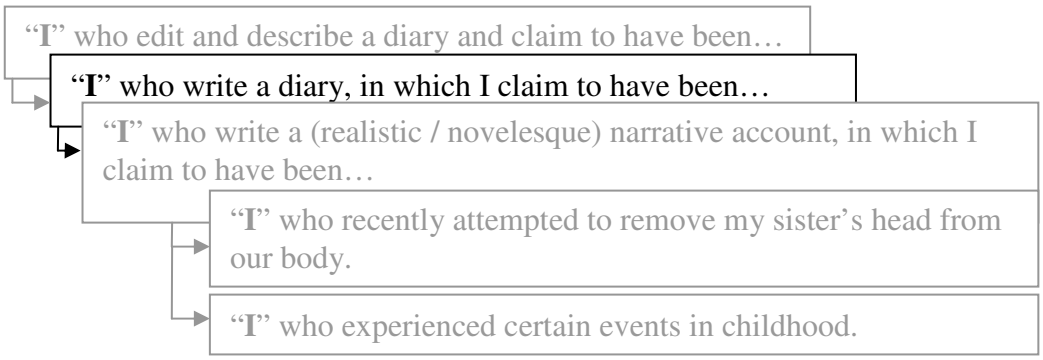

Figure 14. Narrative levels considered in the Not Exactly Nora story

Part Two seems to close by bringing the narrated events back up to the temporality marked by the narration (see Figure 14). The narrator describes sitting down at a desk and writing the book's first lines—" I was writing this book" (335), in direct response to her friend Audrey's insistence (335) that she sort herself out.[38] As Part Three begins, however, this temporal and personal closure proves illusory, as the diary that follows puts enough pressure on the faultlines within the "I" that the sense of an identifiable narrating subject comes apart. A new "I" explains that things had gone on happening while she struggled to put her story into words (in Parts One and Two), and that "I" had tracked these events in a daily diary. This diary tells of an increasing sense that its narrator is not in control of the narration in the novelistic sections, nor indeed of the diary itself. It forces the reader to recast the previous 338 pages of narrative, seeing not a confident retelling, but an ongoing negotiation between claiming and disowning. When she finally asks the despairing question, "Who's writing this book anyway?" (373) the diary's narrator means that her way of making her memories and experiences cohere

[38] This address occurs during an extremely intimate conversation, and establishes Audrey as an addressee for Parts One and Two. Nora (so call her) then admits, "It sounded like reasonable advice, but I did not think I would follow it" (335).

into a narrative in the first person has failed, just as the stresses and strains within Parts One and Two suggest that it must.

This dizzying failure can easily be cast as a complete disintegration of the reader's sense of who Nora is, but the blending-theory account of the novel can demonstrate that the resultant indeterminacy is in fact narrowly confined to the way the narrating subject gives an account of herself—that is, much of the rest of the story-world remains intact. The multiplicity of "I" instances is bewildering, but as suggested in Figure 14, the reader can assign these to levels of narration, if not writing or speaking subjects. A new narrating instance of "I" introduces and footnotes the diary, and an "I" within the diary claims to be making her hasty entries in it while writing the preceding 338 pages. This means that the reader must now begin multiple simultaneous blends. The first returning "I," the one that introduces the diary, must remain somewhat mysterious, presenting a deictic center that seems temporally locatable *after* the acts of narration that bring the early narrative sections and the diary into being. I want to bracket this "I" temporarily. I will say for the moment that it creates a further pluralization effect, but my focus in this section will be the multifarious blending process by which the reader can cope with the diary itself.

The diary is not a narrative. I say this primarily because it does not have the posterior temporal positioning, the hindsight-like knowledge that allows its narrator to see the whole of what she recounts as she recounts it. And yet, at the same time, because the pronouns, existents, and even some events remain familiar from the preceding narrative sections, I argue that the reader will generally tend to read it *as* narrative, adapting the "I" and its discourse to the already

extant narrative frame.[39] The diary's "narrator" explains that she writes in order "to find out what Blanche wants. To find out what Blanche *knows*. To supply the evidence that will exonerate me, should this information incriminate us. To leave a true and faithful account, in the event of my death" (341-2). Meeting these words, the reader can recognize the name "Blanche" and the writing activity presented in Parts One and Two. Rather than taking the diary as a stand-alone non-narrative text, the reader can take it as a continuation, a supplemental text to the preceding narrative. This reading activity would seem to be, therefore, a single-scope blend, taking up materials from the diary and fitting them to the organizing narrative frame—in effect, subsuming the diary form to the narrative form. At the same time, however, the narrator here baldly declares the very intent that the reader may come to suspect when she accuses Blanche of attempted murder—not to mention the potential contradiction between exoneration and a "true and faithful account." The diary has begun by describing the circumstances in which the narrator narrated the preceding sections, and therefore it begins to prompt the reader to modify the very narrative frame by which he rebuilds the story-blend from the text.

This doubled adaptation, wherein the reader adapts the diary form to the preceding narrative, but in so doing also has to revise his sense of that narrative, changes the kind of blending activity being undertaken. No longer can the reader simply apply new textual material to an organizing frame; rather, the new material begins to act as an organizing frame as well. The single-scope blending activity that occurs throughout Parts One and Two becomes, in Part Three, a *double-scope* blend. It maintains the same kind of generic space—"Nora gives an account of Nora and Blanche's experience"—but as suggested above, the name "Nora" no longer

[39] Prior experience with epistolary narratives (*Clarissa*, for instance) or the tradition of narrative-as-memoir (from *Pamela* to *Pale Fire*) makes the process easier—and calls into question the concept of a *narrator's* "hindsight" (as opposed to that of an "editor" figure) as a necessary characteristic of narrative itself.

signifies in quite the same way. It constitutes a stand-in for the term "narrator," and now, as the diary works its reorganization, it recedes until it has little more naming-power than the pronoun "I." The guiding goal for this blend remains the same: to figure out "how to read" the narrator's account in order to attain insight into her/their life and experience. Now the inputs constitute, on the one hand, the direct-story blend "Nora (Not) Alone," and the direct-story blend produced by reading the diary as narrative (as constituting narration, existents, and events). To compose the blend, the reader repeats the narrative-reading activity described above, matching pronouns, names, and verbs to roles for narrator and existents. The resultant blended space constitutes the narrator as "she who wrote the narrative while also keeping a diary"—as a human subject with a causal connection to both texts. As the reader tries to read the diary as narrative, however, the material being read allows for an increasing variety of possible stories, producing different possible versions of the narrator's experience and writing activities. The very frame that allows the reader to parse the text begins to pry apart the story-level concept for the narrator as a subject.

Several crucial passages prompt directly for this disintegration by requiring the reader to re-work his sense of how Parts One and Two were composed, and eventually by undermining the mimetic and ethical legibility of the crucial pronouns "I" and "she." The diary's narrator reveals that what the reader has been reading is not simply a straightforward account, but something that has been edited, and eventually re-edited over and over again. "She" (if it is one person) at first describes her struggles with writing Parts One and Two, and quickly begins showing signs of paranoia. She explains that she fears that she may not be fully in control of her own writing; soon she reports, "This morning I found something in my notebook I did not remember writing"

(346) namely a playful limerick inserted into Part One, just after her description of the childhood Nora holding a knife to the childhood Blanche's throat (116). The diary's narrator claims "I" wrote the childhood description but not the limerick—and therefore assigns it, like all the other gaps in her memory, to "Blanche."[40] *She* wrote the limerick because "I" cannot remember writing it. And yet, the limerick does not appear on page 116; there is only the part about the knife. This absence prompts for an adjustment to the original "Nora (Not) Alone" blend. Its narrator not only wrote, but also *edited* her discourse, out of fear about its origins. Her early wonder, "Are these my words?" (7), takes on an ominous new meaning.

Further diary sections amplify the uncertainty about the provenance of Parts One and Two—and therefore the ethical sense of "how to read" them—as the diarist describes contemplating numerous schemes to hide her writing, her account of herself, from "Blanche." She concocts elaborate encoding ideas, as well as a literal squirreling-away of textual fragments,[41] but her efforts force her to admit the obvious aporia: "if nobody can read it, why write in the first place?" and after a line break she answers, "Like a squid, to make my escape behind a screen of ink?" (347) She begins erasing obsessively, so that she can hardly remember which things stayed written, and which did not. Looking back on the scarred pages, she observes, "This book has been so much erased that its larger part, like an iceberg's, is invisible. I begin to feel that *that* is the real book. The words you are actually reading are just a sort of erased erasing, a cautiously omitted omission" (355). Here the sudden second-person pronoun re-emphasizes the reader's original dilemma: how should one read a "cautiously omitted

[40] As the narrator herself noted earlier, "being Nora was very largely concerned with, almost synonymous with, not being Blanche" (42-3).
[41] These include a textual "hiding place" that eerily parallels a textual treasure hunt in the index of *Pale Fire* (349).

omission"? These concerns redouble as she wonders whether the *erasings*[42] are hers: "everything I thought was mine begins to look like hers. I'm lip-synching my autobiography" (366). In the course of these revelations, the blending process changes dramatically, as the reader re-reads every "I" and every "she" with profound suspicion. The clear causal connections by which readers of autodiegetic narration are used to placing the "I" (ascribing it to some subject) have come apart. While the narrator began by ostensibly trying to write a clear account of her experiences, her work has actually rendered the reader's grasp of the distinction between what is "hers" and what is "Blanche's" impossible, and *perhaps intentionally so*, a way of letting the narrator evade scrutiny, "like a squid behind a screen of ink."

The book's crux lies in a sequence of musings in which the narrator reconsiders the logic that has made "Blanche" out of gaps in memory and narration. The narrator concludes that she can no longer be sure of her own accuracy in self-referential statements, producing a sequence of possible scenarios that undoes her sense of self:

> "Consider the possibility that Blanche is writing my experiences into existence" (372).
>
> Or alternatively: "I am now anticipating Blanche's interventions so strongly I generate them myself—that I am haunting *myself*" (373).
>
> Or: "I have been doing this all along, i.e. Blanche is my invention" (373).
>
> Or: "I am Blanche" (373).

At this last she recoils, but then elaborates, suggesting that "I" have been "[p]rojecting myself into Nora's experience so strongly that I experience myself as another. In which case I am being haunted by my own rejected experience" (373). These spiraling speculations lead directly to the despairing question, "Who's writing this book anyway?" (373). The narrator answers with a

[42] This effect has an eerie echo in the narrator's discussion of elisions and erasures in *Erasure* (see Chapter Four).

declaration that now seems wholly ambiguous—"I am"—and then immediately objects, "Not good enough" (373). In desperation, she writes, "Nora, Nora, Nora, Nora, Nora!" (373), and stops. The answer "I am" is "not good enough" because of the welter of possible story-world situations that may produce it. These constitute potential completions and elaborations for the "Not Exactly Nora" combined-story blend that fall into three general categories: a.) Nora writes about an awakening Blanche (I call this N vs. B), b.) Blanche writes about an awakening Nora (B vs. N), and c.) One twin or the other no longer exists, but the remaining twin continues to attribute her own actions to the defunct twin (N/B Alone).

a. The Nora Completion (N vs. B) – Interpersonal Conflict

In the most obvious completion, the reader can carry Nora forward as the narrating character, continuing to compress all iterations of "I-now" and "I-then" into a single existent, correlated with the left-side head. In this possible story, Nora grew up, survived a traumatic event, lived in San Francisco, tried to remove her sister's head, and returned home in a psychological shambles. She sat down and wrote an account of these experiences, in which she ever more stridently asserted her distinctness, but at the same time kept a journal that chronicled her increasing fear of self-fragmentation. Now (i.e., page 373) she gives up, frustrated and desperate. This brief summary collects together a vast array of conceptual information (see Figure 15), and relies for its coherence on the way the reader blends the "I" pronouns with frames for narration. It is worth reiterating an early conclusion from Chapter 1: this kind of ontologically-pluralized autodiegetic narration calls attention to the fact that the reader's sense of the narrator as a subject, and of the prehistory of the discourse (as the narrator's creation) is as

much a part of the story-world as the other characters. Nora-as-narrator does not pre-date the reader's encounter with the text. Instead, the reader collects pronouns and verbs and aligns them with the existents and events of the direct-story blend (above). This act of collection makes available the conclusion that Nora narrates. Using this blend to read a sentence such as "This morning I found something in my notebook I did not remember writing" (346), a reader can read the "I" as Nora, and the ambiguous agent who produced the limerick as Blanche, and continue the agonistic narrative of "Nora vs. Blanche." This struggle has become morally ambiguous, since the diary suggests that Nora's motives may not be honorable, but it is on the whole the easiest conclusion. But because the diary troubles the blend that makes a narrating subject out of pronouns and expectations, this is not the only way to read such a sentence.

b. The Blanche Completion (B vs. N) – Interpersonal Conflict

Following the narrator's suggestion that perhaps "I am Blanche," the reader can also exactly invert the identity connections established in the "N vs. B" completion. Here, the name *Blanche* supplants that of *Nora*, becoming the survivor of a traumatic experience that renders *Nora* unconscious. This is a remarkably less comfortable conclusion, for it requires a far more dramatic retrospective re-ordering of the textual and story material. The reader would have to integrate all of the "I" instances in the narrative account in the first two parts, and in the diary with the name "Blanche." If this confusion suffuses the entire narrative, the B vs. N completion becomes indistinguishable from the N vs. B version, for all that would change would be the names. The childhood sections offer this blend's pivot point, however. If the narrator is wrong about how her present conception of self connects to her childhood "self," then the B vs. N

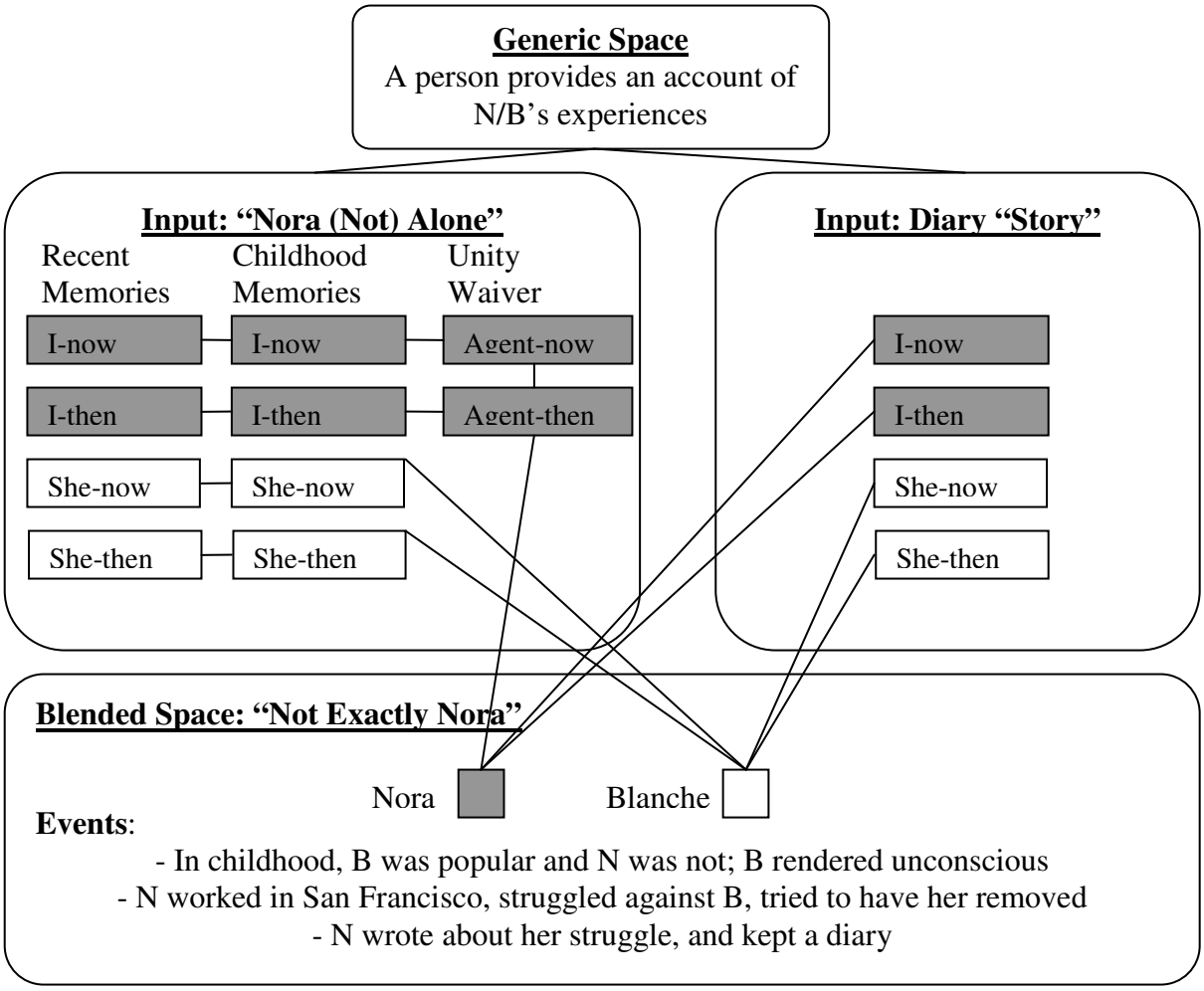

Figure 15. "Combined-story" blend for the Not Exactly Nora story (N vs. B Completion)

completion reorganizes the blend according to these connections. The reader can now connect the narrator with the child "Blanche" who could draw, was popular in Too Bad, and released the captive girl, Donkey-skin.

This completion accepts the same basic premise as the previous completion, that there exist two people throughout the story, but ascribes absolutely vital *childhood* events and experiences differently (see Figure 16). Here, Blanche was popular in school but traumatized by the self-deprecating Nora, survived a traumatic event that rendered Nora unconscious, but began telling herself that *she* was responsible, that she, Blanche, was the one who held the knife, and

thus that she, Blanche, was actually Nora. She lived on through later events as Nora, until the real Nora's reawakening made the continuing attribution impossible. Using this version of the blend to read a sentence such as "This morning I found something in my notebook I did not remember writing" (346), a reader can read the "I" as Blanche, and the ambiguous agent who produced the limerick as Nora. It is a vital reordering, because the limerick intrudes at precisely the moment when the narrator describes one sister holding a knife to the other's throat. If Blanche wrote the limerick, it might be seen as a cry for help, a cry deleted by Nora's morally

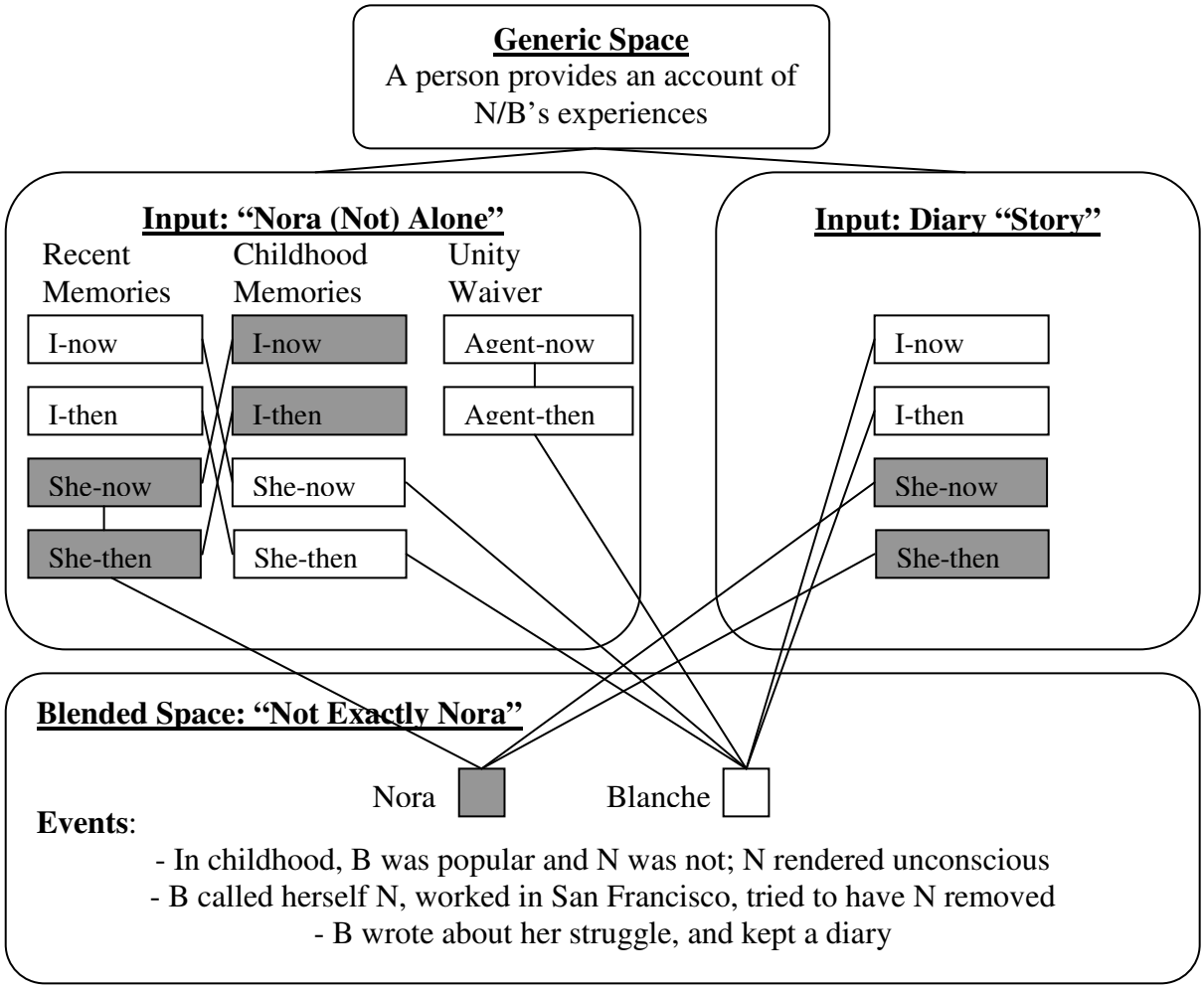

Figure 16. "Combined-story" blend for the Not Exactly Nora story (B vs. N Completion)

worrying erasure. If Nora wrote the limerick, as B vs. N suggests, it might be seen as an attempt at sabotage, and the reader may be inclined to see Blanche's erasing as justified.

c. The Sole-Survivor Completion (N/B Alone) – Intrapersonal Conflict

The third possible completion for "Not Exactly Nora" accepts a troubling possible story-version first voiced by Audrey in Part One, a story version that changes the novel's ethical potential dramatically. Having witnessed "Nora" hurl a plate of cupcakes across a room and then deny it,[43] Audrey remarks, "I can imagine that it would be a big temptation to blame everything that you can't, you know, *own* [. . .] on Blanche. She's like a permanent alibi" (69). Audrey implies that the narrator is the only one of the two heads still capable of consciousness, and that this one head's own traumatic past has begun to meddle with her present emotional and mental experience (see Figure 17). This completion produces a renewed uncertainty about childhood events, for the reader still remains uncertain as to which set of childhood experiences might be ascribable to the wakeful head. Indeed, such information may be permanently unavailable. This "N/B Alone" completion becomes terribly troubling, because it returns the reader to the Unity waiver, and the questions it raised. If one head is indeed no longer functional, there might be at least some way to see its removal as morally justified. Whereas the first two completions of "Not Exactly Nora" make the Unity waiver ethically legible as an immoral act, since the unconscious head is not in fact *non compos mentis*, the N/B Alone completion exactly reverses this potential judgment.

[43] These episodes happen throughout the book; the narrator sometimes names their perpetrator "Lithobolia."

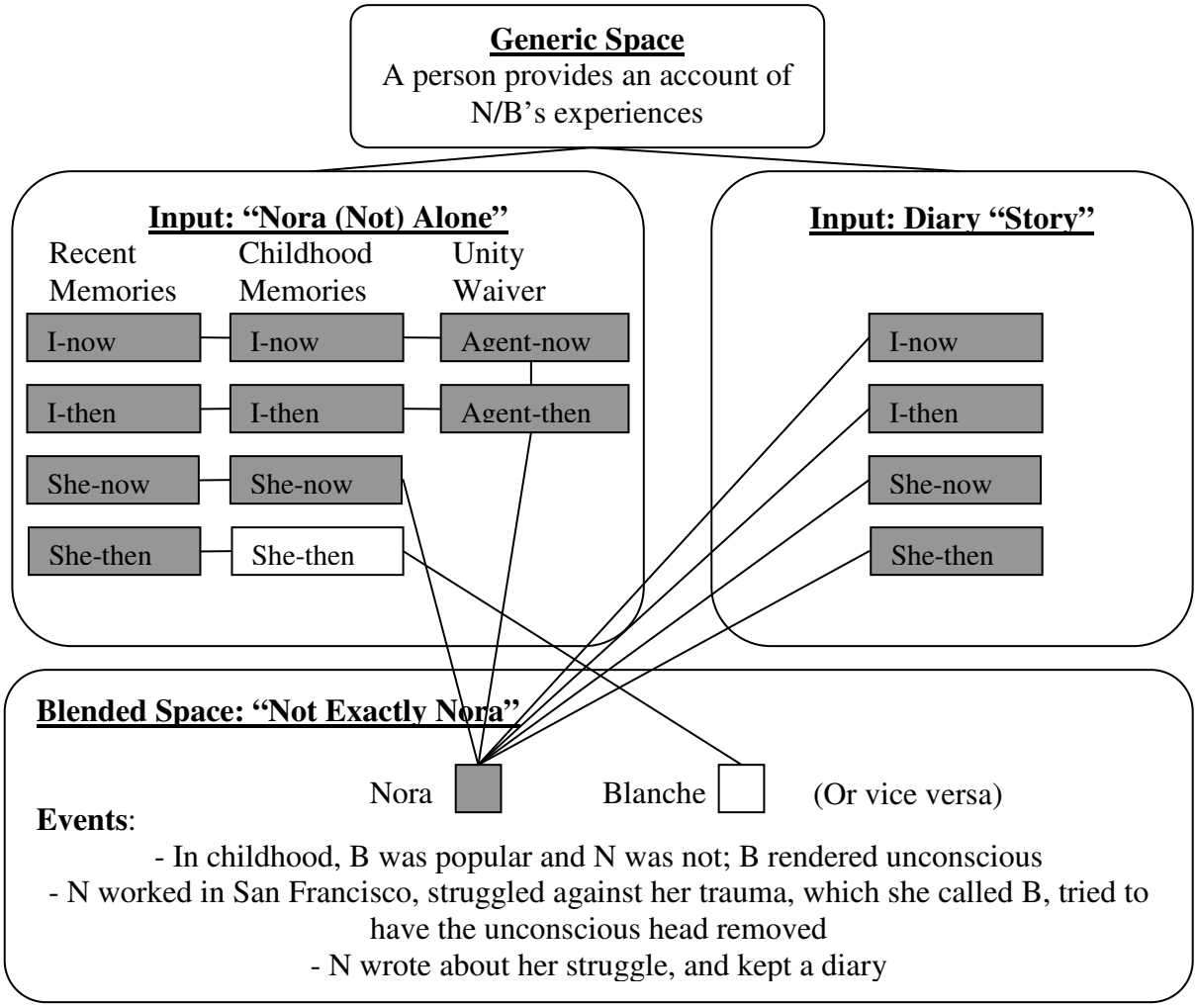

Figure 17. "Combined-story" blend for the Not Exactly Nora story (N/B Alone Completion)

It may seem, however, as though an elaboration along the lines of N/B Alone can be taken to almost any lengths. If one twin's misleading attributions can create a fictionalized version of the other twin, why might they not create her in all circumstances? Might her childhood trauma have led Nora, as she suggests, to "create a world" that contains relatively common twofers? Might it have led her to fabricate everything about *HL* that differs from our

own world?[44]

Insofar as this may appear to be a playful "limit case" of narratorial unreliability, it is worth considering, but it creates a new kind of interpretive problem. By construing some story-world entity as responsible for everything that makes this alternate USA different from our own, the reader would assign to "the narrator" (who can't even safely be called "Nora" any more) *all* of the activities that could also be assigned to the empirical author: inventing the twofer concept and the resultant shifts in identity politics, writing all of the varied texts included in the book *HL*, and even fabricating the graphical artifacts that belong to the alternate USA (news clippings and so forth). If this entity is simply making things up at will, rather than "giving an account of herself," then she stands wholly outside of the fictive world,[45] leaving us to rebuild the entire interpretive framework outlined above for the "I" within her narrative. If this entity is actively delusional, then the text as it stands offers no way to interpret the delusion's extent and purpose (if it has one). Extending the power of confabulation to this limit highlights the razor-thin distinction between the concept of "implied author" and the concept of "autodiegetic narrator": the one is responsible for the narrative gesture that produces a novel; the other for the narrative gesture that produces an account of the self.[46]

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[44] In terms of possible-worlds theory, this would make Nora responsible for the novel's "salient structure" (see Pavel 57).

[45] An entire discussion lurks here. Were the narrator heterodiegetic, I would argue that she would still have to stand within the story-world that includes twofers and so forth, and would still remain distinct from the implied author. If, on the other hand, she made her invention of the twofers explicit (becoming an auctorial narrator), the distinction would be harder to maintain. This kind of conundrum leads Genette to invoke implied authors with great caution, and leads Walsh to abandon them altogether. Because *HL*'s narrator is explicitly homodiegetic, I will table this argument for the time being.

[46] These need not, of course, be mutually exclusive gestures. Metafictional narratives frequently encourage the reader to integrate narrator with implied author, and novelized autobiographies cause their audiences so much excitement and difficulty precisely because they prompt readers to integrate the implied author, the autodiegetic narrator, *and the empirical author*, such that the novel is also claimed as an account of (an empirical) self. When the author follows novelistic conventions and produces novelistically satisfying story-level events that cannot be empirically verified, a reader may call the result "lies" instead of "fiction."

d. Not Exactly Nora: Concluding without Cohering

This series of possible completions produces an undecidable story structure by the end of Part Three, making a coherent ascription of events, motives, and memories impossible, and therefore also placing the ethical dilemma occasioned by the Unity waiver beyond the reader's grasp. The sketches above do not exhaust the possibilities; rather, they sketch the interpretive field in which the reader can operate in rebuilding the narrating agency out of the manifold discourse material.[47] The questions "Who are you?" and "What have you done?" turn out to refer the reader back to the text: the only thing clear is that, at the story level, some concatenation of agency (a person, more than one person) wrote it all down.[48] Thus far, the novel would appear to encourage the reader to follow the advice of the fictional Dr. Vyv Hornbeck's Zizek- and Lacan-inflected Venn therapy, as it appears in a pamphlet included at the beginning of Part Four: "In time we will learn to count the petals [of our multiple selves] without plucking them" (385), finding plurality within the self without the need to exclude it as other. This is the kind of formulation that Butler's consideration of "giving an account of myself" favors, an ethical obligation to give an adequate account by accepting that no (narrative) account can be adequate: "If the identity we say we are cannot possibly capture us and marks immediately an excess and opacity that falls outside the categories of identity, then any effort 'to give an account of oneself' will have to fail in order to approach being true" (Butler 42).[49] Butler's formulation itself

[47] For example, in either of the interpersonal-conflict versions, the reader can assign even different parts of the discourse itself to the two different story-level character-narrators—the potential elaborations are many.
[48] Butler, too, suggests that "it may be that to have an origin means precisely to have several possible versions of the origin" (37).
[49] Chambers and Carver clarify this further, arguing that failure itself "is constitutive" and that "[t]he 'I' is that which, by definition, could never give its own account" (100). This formulation is in some ways misleading, because it suggests a level of inaccessibility that Butler does not seem to mean. The failure offers the self to the other as limited, as incapable of *full* narration; it does not mean that narration is pointless, or should not be attempted.

suggests that her view is more complex than Hornbeck's, for (*pace* some of her exegetes) her words entail that there exist some standards for judging a given failure as an adequate failure—as an accounting-failure that does indeed "approach being true."

Jackson would seem to agree, for already the constants within the field of story-level possibilities should begin to emerge from the undecidable tangle. As noted above, much of the story-world not concerned with actions attributable to Nora or Blanche remains unaltered by their conundrums, and even their actions take on a specifiable cognitive structure: the frame of "trauma." Something terrible happened, and the affective consequences linger, as Lyotard's post-Freudian analysis of "Emma" puts it, in "a cloud of energy not entirely fixed in psychic appearance but also not 'free' either. The affect is present but not represented" (32). In attempting—and failing—to rebuild a clear subject-position for "Nora" in the first three parts of *HL*, the reader recognizes a locus of affectivity that may correspond to Nora or Blanche or both, and that includes a lingering unrepresented situation that literally cannot be spoken (by that narrating locus) in narrative form.

In Parts One and Two, the reader conducts a single-scope blend ("Nora (Not) Alone") to construct "Nora" as a narrating subject who gives an account of herself, and thereby discern "how to read" her narrative—both in the sense of how to understand the pronoun "I," and how to evaluate the actions in the story. This blend's elaboration shifts the reader's attention from the narrated actions to the act of narration and the intent that governs it.[50] In Part Three, the diary begins a retrospective reassessment that shifts the reading blend from a single-scope to a double-scope blend, which in turn can be completed and elaborated in multiple ways ("Not Exactly Nora"). These combined-story completions do, however, all share a key event, namely the

[50] This corresponds in interesting ways to Copland's category of "collaborative agent-reflexive blend" (143).

trauma, implied but not represented in the discourse, that marks the difference between past configurations of "Nora," "Blanche," "I," and "she," and the present efforts to narrate those configurations. All of the possible "Not Exactly Nora" stories are, *somehow*, "the same" account, an account of an anterior state of being before a trauma, a gap where the traumatic event has to be inferred by the reader, and then an account of a posterior traumatized state of being (after the trauma). Because some completions suggest opposite interpretations of the Unity waiver, such sameness is tantalizing, prompting the reader to look for new global insight. How can a story that includes two people be "the same" as a story that includes only one?

Second-Order Combined-Story Blend: "Trauma and Recovery"

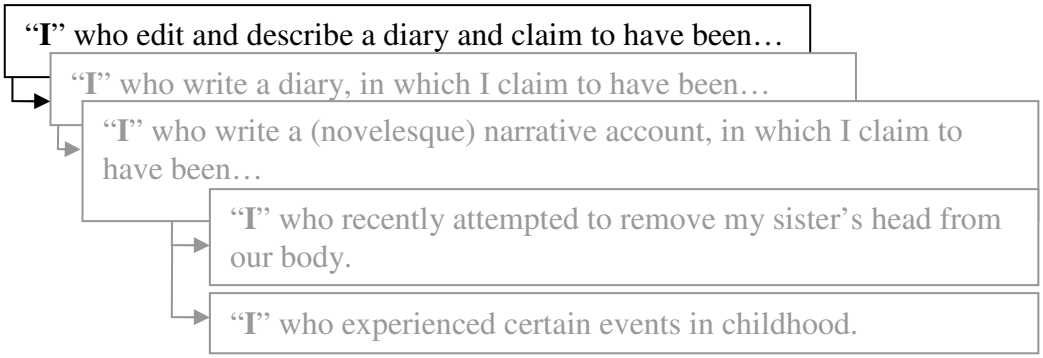

Figure 18. Narrative levels considered in the Trauma and Recovery story

Even at the beginning of Part Three, a narrating "I" introduces the diary materials, and claims to be the entity who organized and now provides the reader with those materials (see Figure 18). This "I" footnotes the diary, and then returns to continue narrating after the diary's despairing conclusion, describing her surrender to the other—she still calls her Blanche, but do the names matter by now?—and then she narrates further episodes from childhood as well as her

return to Too Bad, Nevada. There she describes confronting her father, the dollhouse that has haunted her memories, and the trauma that silenced one twin. If the "I" has become radically unstable, how can the reader parse this continued usage? I argue that the account of trauma and recovery has to become a second-order combined story blend, a sense of a series of events that produces and constitutes the act of narration in *HL*. It is not "the" story in *HL*, nor is it simply "a" story. As an account of a self both singular and plural, it is not quite narrated at all; rather, by narrating a paradoxical and non-coherent set of possible stories, the narrator makes the second-order story-level blend *narratable*—for the reader. That is to say, the reader bears witness to Nora and Blanche's experience of extraordinary embodiment, by learning how to see a singularity in their inescapably plural experience. It is to this blend that the final section of the present chapter now turns.

In their failure to produce autodiegetic narration, the subjectivity associated with both Nora and Blanche becomes clearer at the diary's end than in the various narrative attempts. As "Nora" puts it, in an recurring motif: "Under hypnosis you can be convinced that the stage is empty, and still, if sent for a stroll, avoid the piano. By the swerves, though, I fancy you might in time be able to deduce the shape of what you cannot see, even if you couldn't put it into words" (43).[51] The sense of self narrated as Nora's and Blanche's is, like the trauma they struggle to recall, unspeakable, *and yet* by speaking, by "invoking" the "I" (to use Butler's term),[52] they offer both the reader and themselves a way to recognize their unique subjective

[51] This motif also appears when people avoid looking at Nora and Blanche in church (157), when Nora hunts for the original model of their childhood dollhouse (219), when Nora decides that the erased parts of her account are the real parts (355), and in a description of the final recovery of their traumatic memory (406).

[52] Butler uses "invocation" as a way of describing the use of "I" as "paradoxically, a performative and non-narrative act, even as it functions as the fulcrum for narrative itself. I am, in other words, doing something with that 'I'—elaborating and positioning it in relation to a real or imagined audience—which is something other than telling a story about it, even though 'telling' remains part of what I do" (Butler 66).

experience. That "way" is a second-order combined-story blend that integrates all of the possible stories, and produces the experiences of Nora and Blanche as singular, as pertaining only to them, but also as plural, as involving two loci of affect and agency.

The process of recovery undergone in Part Four of *HL* involves an extremely complex series of events, too convoluted to recount in detail here. In the most basic terms, the narrator at first recounts a sequence of events as though they are childhood memories, but later discovers that they are childhood *stories*, to which the twins clung during and after a traumatic event. The narrator at last recovers a memory of the traumatic event (see also 408-9): When they are 13, their grandmother dies in an accident, and one twin (call her "Nora") uses their shared fantasy stories to blame the other ("Blanche," perhaps) for the death, to force her to let go her control of their body as punishment: "I washed her mouth out with soap" (414). This act echoes the internalized normativity that Nora evinces throughout much of Parts One and Two, the sense that she and Blanche are to blame for their extraordinary embodiment—namely, the sense of herself as "freak"—and the resentment she levels at the "Blanche" construct for her innocence of this internalized guilt.[53]

This traumatic, abusive event takes the same cognitive form as Nora's problem with her extraordinary "twofer" status. In both cases, she tries to shoulder (pun perhaps intended) guilt, blame, and shame for conditions and events that are not directly attributable to any one agency (let alone any one person). The accidental death and extraordinary birth are the same kind of event, in terms of their mirrored positions at the extremities of life, and their similar diffuse causality. In the traumatic act, the narrator portrays a crime that is simultaneously directed against the self, and against an other, an attack on the otherness built into herself.

[53] An early turn of phrase anticipates this revelation: "Blanche is smooth as soap" (6).

I suggest assigning names, above, because this act, as written in the first person, "I washed her mouth out with soap," tempts the reader to return to the simple narrative-reading model. As the previous section outlines, however, the sentence explodes into a variety of possible story-level interpretations. The "I" no longer indicates one twin or the other with any certainty. And yet, the grammatical form of the act, a penetration rendered in almost sexual terms, cannot be erased by this indeterminacy. The narrator juxtaposes the physical consequences with the psycho-physical results: "The soap squirted out, described a tiny parabolic arc" (414), and then: "The strangest thing I'd ever felt was my own right hand" (414), now hers alone. To be sure that an assault took place, and that it did so in terms of inappropriately-imposed guilt, is to read the form shared by all possible variations on "Not Exactly Nora," carrying out a deft but still extremely complex blend. First, the current "I" adds the final layer of narrative level, the narration that claims to be the same narrator as that which still maintains causal connections to both diary and "Nora (Not) Alone." It could refer to "Nora" as the waking head who was unpopular as a child. It could refer to "Blanche" as the waking head who projected herself into the identity of the unpopular childhood twin. It could refer to either as the lone head that survives after the permanent incapacitation of the other. This undecidability repeats the threefold range of possibilities outlined in the preceding section—possible stories that now form the inputs for a new blend. These three inputs designate the possible story-level configurations produced in "Not Exactly Nora," and they align not on the basis of the story-level roles of character or narrator, but rather on the basis of the persistent existent—Blanche and Nora's shared body—and the states of being in the trauma frame. In composing this blend, the reader recognizes the sequence of states of being (interpersonal

struggle, trauma, indeterminacy of self) as *the same* across all three inputs, making what I call the "Trauma and Recovery" blend a different kind of blend, a mirror blend in which all of the inputs share an organizing frame (see Figure 19).

To complete this blend, however, the reader must shift his footing once again, drastically reconceiving the novel. Thus far, the frames governing his reading have always taken narrative form. Here, however, the blend allows the reader to see narration used by the narrator as a means for working out the details of trauma, and carrying out anamnesis and recovery.[54] As Butler puts it, "a preconstituted self is not revealed; instead, the very practice of self-constitution is performed" (114). By using the "I" inappropriately (by *abusing* it, or perhaps repeating it "under erasure") the narrator signifies the traumatic process she undergoes, even as what "she" narrates remains in several respects undecidable. For the reader, the vast constellation of experiences in *Half Life*'s alternate United States remains a singular self-narrative, in the sense that it localizes affective reactions, memories, and also moments of amnesia and opacity, even if the subject positions—the loci of feeling and action variously named Nora and Blanche—remain as plural and difficult to read as the "extraordinary" twofer body.[55]

In elaborating this blend, the reader will be able to understand each "I" as a problematic self-reference, one required by the conventions of narration that inescapably govern the act of

[54] Working with *PG*, Shackelford hints at this kind of shift in her discussion of Luhman's distinction between "observation" and "operation," between what a system's discourse says it does, and how it works (70); see also Silverman's discussion of the "event" in Lyotard: "the event of happening is different from what happens" (226).
[55] The novel achieves, therefore, the impact that Butler suggests in her discussion of Adriana Cavarero: "Insofar as 'this' fact of singularizing exposure, which follows from bodily existence, is one that can be reiterated endlessly, it constitutes a collective condition, characterizing us all equally, not only reinstalling the 'we,' but also establishing a structure of substitutiability at the core of singularity" (34-5). For Butler and Cavarero, "[t]his exposure [. . .] cannot be narrated. I cannot give an account of it, even though it structures any account I might give. The norms by which I seek to make myself recognizable are not fully mine" (35).

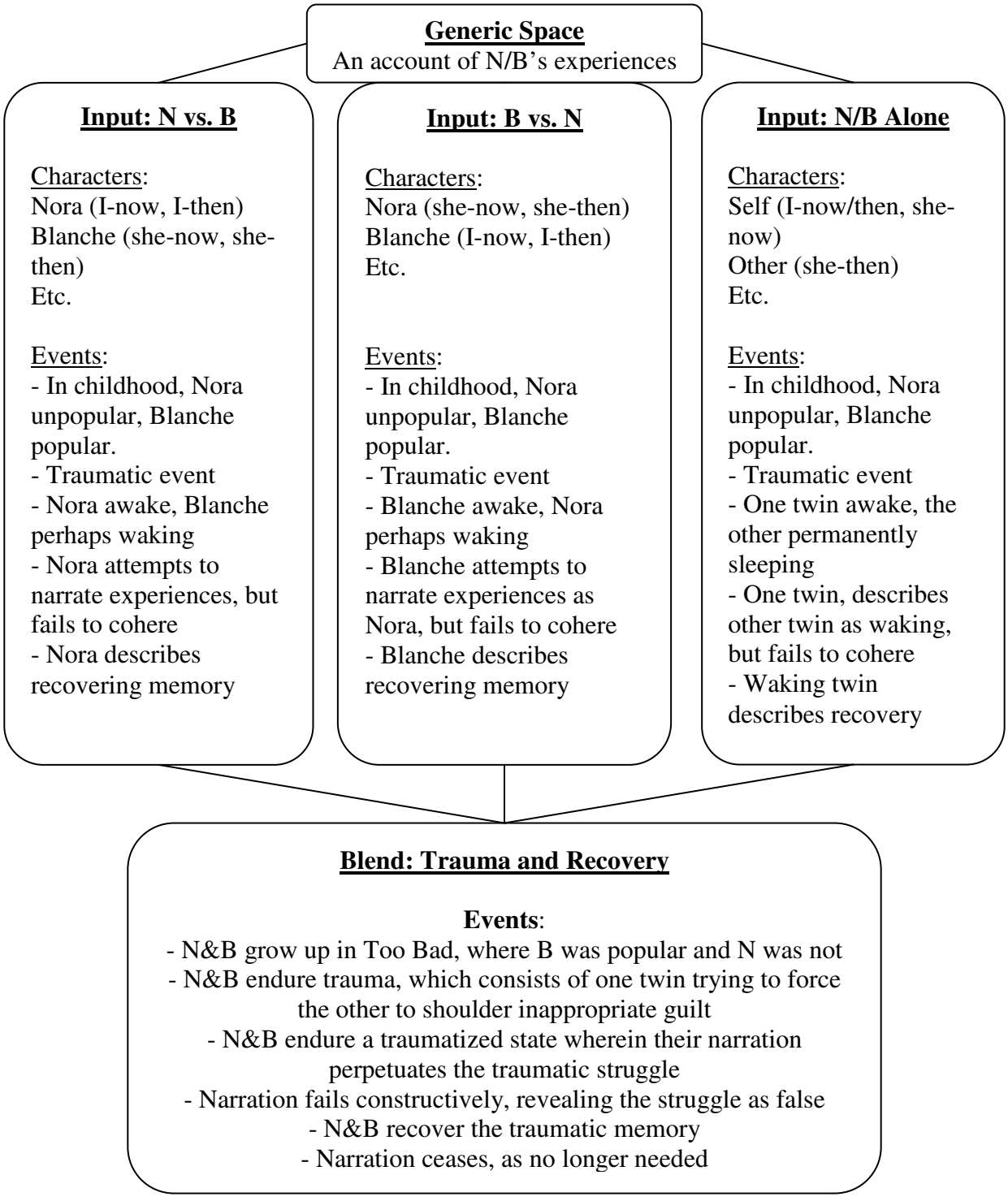

Figure 19. "Second-order combined-story" blend for the Trauma and Recovery story

giving an account of oneself, but also ever inadequate to the task at hand.[56] In reading a sentence such as "So I washed her mouth out with soap," the reader recognizes the narrated meaning that wants to confine "I" to one head and the name "Nora," and "her" to the other head and the name "Blanche." But by integrating this narrative understanding with the megablend "Trauma and Recovery," he also recognizes the *narrating* meaning, by which the sentence becomes legible as an act by a writing subject in whom both "I" and "she" inhere—a "we" and a "they," not an "I." This configuration of subjectivity allows a different kind of response to the initial ethical quandary about "how to read" the narrator's account. Rather than trying to ascribe a definitive innocence or guilt to one head or another, the reader can now ascribe to *both* Nora *and* Blanche a gradient of responsibility for three kinds of activity: 1) the infliction of a normative discourse, for which they cannot be held responsible, and in which their embodiment is "wrong" and must be corrected; 2) the willful endorsement or acceptance of that discourse, up to and including the attempt to narrate in the first-person singular, for which their responsibility increases the longer they retain an uncritical attitude toward it, and 3) the consequent acts of self-denial that lead them to isolate themselves from friends and family, acts for which they remain wholly responsible—but responsible *to* those friends and family, not responsible in an abstract sense, to some higher ethical authority.

In the category of "friends and family," the reader must number himself by the book's end, for every instance of "I" also makes the reader responsible as well. Insofar as the narrating act accepts responsibility for a self-assault (an attempt to purge the other), it demands recognition from the reader, both of the extraordinary subject's presence (as produced in the

[56] That is to say, it is the problem of autobiography, of writing life into words, self-reflexively, as articulated by Nora's namesake, James Olney. For further discussion in this direction see Pöhlmann (para 9).

reader's blended concept) and absence (as rendered more or less illegible by the narrative tools at her disposal). Jackson's novel thus fulfills an expectation that Butler sets up in theoretical terms, by putting the reader in the position of Nora and Blanche's "other": "The other witnesses and registers what cannot be narrated, functioning as one who might discern a narrative thread, though mainly as one whose practice of listening enacts a receptive relation to the self that the self [. . .] cannot offer itself" (80). What is enigmatic about the text "belongs" to the reader as much as to the narrator.[57]

To assert that the "I" must somehow be assignable to one of the two heads is to repeat the various acts of dissociation and erasure described throughout the book. But to assert that the plethora of "I" instances makes the text's meaning radically inaccessible is to perpetrate *the very same act*, rendering Nora and Blanche illegible as human subjects, and erasing the delicate web of responsibilities that they build up. What the novel insists upon is that to recognize their unique duality and singularity at once is to constitute their subjectivity as recognizably responsible—and human.

Such an insistence appears most distinctively in two key elements that reinforce the extraordinary singularity-and-plurality-at-once. The first is a recurring motif that becomes resonant as a cognitive schema for the singular duality that the narrative depicts; the second is a narrative maneuver that avoids one last risk of reconstituting the "I" as a singular narrating subject.

The recurring image schema is that of a plurality that can also be interpreted as a singularity, even within the confines of everyday language. It appears many times, but a few

[57] See Butler's point: "Paradoxically, I become dispossessed in the telling, and in that dispossession an ethical claim takes hold, since no 'I' belongs to itself" (132; see also 134).

examples should suffice. Recounting Mama's journeys, the narrator describes her encounter with, first, a single bird, and then a flock of birds, that most natural singular-but-plural entity. The language comes fluidly, as the narrator describes a bush "full of small birds all shouting, more birds than leaves. They all rose at once, hung in the air, swung around, and fell back on the bush" (39). The subject is plural, "they," but the acts of rising, hanging, swinging, and falling, prompt for the schemas for individuated movement against a non-moving background. Later in the book, when the narrator and Audrey are driving together, and in reaction to an obstacle, "We swerved" (70). The "we" occurs naturally enough, and the narrator then wistfully observes another car with a lone driver: "she looked wonderfully lonely and sufficient, a tiny jeweled wonder inside an enameled egg" (71). Here the imagery repeats the depiction of plural and singular examples, as well as the association with the figure/ground distinction—here in the form of the "swerve," the same movement by which the narrator suggests one might deduce the shape of a piano. The final example of the same schema moves a step farther, fusing plurality, singularity, and even cognitive activity. Walking in the desert late in the novel, the narrator encounters a hive of bees, and mentions almost casually that the hive "knew I was there" (418). Here the conceptual ante has been upped, for the bees have clearly individuated bodily forms, and yet seem to know and to act with collective intent at a higher structural level. What is plural about them can fly and sting independently with many bodies. What is singular about them can act and react as a body, as a collective.

This motif and the image-schema it prompts are not simply visual and verbal play; they take aim at linguistic discomfort with *human* singularity and plurality. As the complex narrative structure pushes the reader toward an ever-clearer combination of singularity and plurality in the

narrating subject, the figurative language offers up model after model from linguistic realms beyond the "I." In associating these images with the figure/ground distinction, they highlight the cognitive maneuvers by which the reader builds his sense of the second-order "Trauma and Recovery" blend. By demanding that the reader recognize both singularity and plurality in the human subject being represented, and by offering these and other image-schemas as examples,[58] the novel suggests that hives of bees and flocks of birds may be better cognitive models for understanding the hive of self-references involved in trying (and failing) to give an account of oneself.

The risk remains, however, that the precarious paradoxical conclusion—singularity and plurality at once—may collapse under the weight of the recurrent "I." For all of the caveats and intricate uncertainties, the narrator does go on writing "I," and with more confidence in Part Four than in Parts One and Two. Rather than moving to recognize this singular-and-plural subject as responsible for the text, as that which can never be committed to the text, but which is simultaneously called into being as a response to that text,[59] the reader may simply assert that, trauma now successfully recovered, the narrator can settle down and be "I, Nora Olney," once again. I think Jackson foresaw this, for the novel ends with a maneuver that makes such a reduction impossible.[60]

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[58] Another very good example would be the plurality of houses that match the phrase "the dollhouse" throughout the book, culminating in the narrator's final description: "Now I was in the dollhouse, [with both heads stuck into the toy] *and* I was in the dollhouse [sitting within the foundation of the full-size building that served as the dollhouse's model—or vice versa]. Doubly home: a good place to wind up" (431). These houses, too, are "the same" but plural, and they, too, come associated with the figure-ground distinction (see in particular 219)—but they also constitute the book's most complex and omnipresent imagery, and would require far too much space to elucidate further.

[59] Butler makes a similar point: "If we want a coherent, uninterrupted account, "we may be preferring the seamlessness of the story to something we might tentatively call the truth of the person, a truth that, to a certain degree, [. . .] might well become more clear in moments of interruption, stoppage, open-endedness—in enigmatic articulations that cannot easily be translated into narrative form" (64).

[60] This seems to be precisely why one reviewer calls it "sabotage" (Turrentine para 7).

The narrator describes sitting alone in the desert during a rain shower, and then the reader meets a page marked only with the occasional punctuation mark (see Figure 20). The narration then explains, "I look down and see that my ballpoint has been sponged clean by the wet paper. The page is blank, except for the occasional ding where I bore down on a comma or a dash. But I can read it perfectly. I scribble until the ink comes. I want to go back and fill in the gaps. But somewhere in the house, someone is speaking. 'Nora?' I say" (437). The "I" once again opens on the abyss, allowing any conclusion *except* the simple one that an individual named Nora is and has been writing all along. The one who asks "Nora?" is not the "I, Nora Olney" of any facile compression. Perhaps Blanche picks up the pen and writes after the ink-purged page. Perhaps Blanche has been writing all along. The important point is how this conclusion closes the novel. The narration stops because the narrator stops writing, and she stops writing because she no longer needs the narration as a means of anamnesis and recovery.[61] She speaks to her sister. In conventional narrative terms, the ending remains "open," the content of the conversation between the twins unrecorded, their very survival uncertain. But this irresolution comes about because of a different kind of resolution. By neglecting to fill in the section of the memoir erased by the rain and by turning away from the address to the reader, the "I" renders herself (herselves?) unrecuperable by means of the text alone.[62] By narrating, they have recovered their memories and, it appears, a functional dialogue. By ceasing to narrate, they

[61] In spite of the terminology, I want to avoid too thorough a psychoanalysis of the text. *HL* has little truck with therapy, and Jackson seems to agree with Butler's formulation of Foucault's later work. As Butler sees it, his process of self-work/self-care "is an open-ended task, one that can have no final form. He thus disputes notions of progress or rational development that would take hold of the reflexive relation and guide it toward a clear conclusion" as in psychoanalysis (129).

[62] Once again, compare this result to Butler's formulation: "this desire [for recognition] will be under an obligation to keep itself alive as desire and not to resolve itself. 'Oh, now I know who you are': at this moment, I cease to address you, or to be addressed by you" (43). The novel's conclusion in a turning-away also echoes Butler's (see 136).

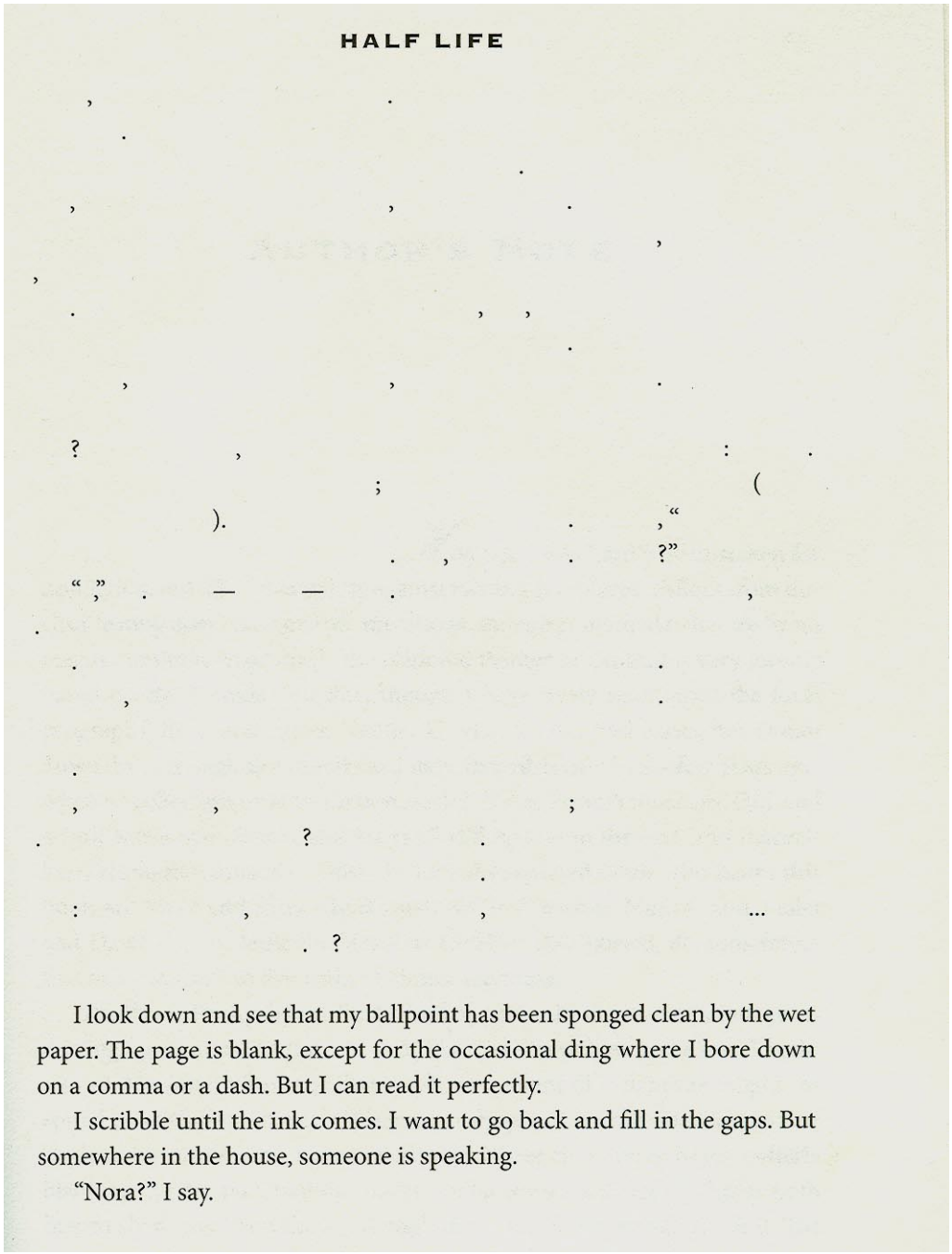


Figure 20. *HL* page 437

reassert their distinctness (*but not their independence*) from both their textual being, and from the reader.

Conclusions

This chapter has sketched many forms of movement in what is after all a static piece of print and not a computer-powered hypertext. Most significant among these are the reader's movement through the text, and the kind of "movement" or change in the cognitive constructs by which, I argue, the reader attains global insight into the story of *HL*. I use the term "movement" because it connotes a change in state encapsulated by a static appraisal—in short, the very *both/and* logic I have been highlighting throughout. I also choose the term because it successfully includes both changes: the traverse by which the reader turns the pages, and sea-changes in the blending activity of narrative reading. In both cases, there is a degree of unpredictability, and therefore of undescribability. Readers probably find it necessary to page back and forth through the novel on occasion, particularly when encountering self-referential footnotes. More importantly, readers probably reach different kinds of blending activity during different parts of their perusal of the text.

I have described the blends sequentially, as though they constitute a kind of meta-narrative progression that every reader must follow, but this is more a product of the sequential exigencies of schematic explanation. A reader can reach early intimations of the "trauma" frame that will help compose the final mirror-blend as early as the narrator's very first monologue (page 5 at the latest), and readers experienced with the ontological concerns of twentieth-century

fiction will probably begin prying apart the "Nora" writing subject well before the diary makes her disintegration explicit. Even once a combined-story blend has begun, the reader has to continue using the direct-story blends to integrate new discourse information into his developing "megablend" of the novel's multifarious story-level possibilities. My point here is that, while reading itself is linear and sequential, the blending activity involved with reading-as-narrative is nonlinear and nonsequential.

The primary uniqueness built into *HL* (and into the remaining books in the present study) is the *cognitive form* of the *shifts* between blending processes, specifically, the way it uses a straightforward narrative-reading blend and a less-straightforward ontologically pluralized blend to produce a "both/and" integration of apparently opposed concepts. The blending-model of narrative employed here allows my analysis to describe clearly the interactions between the plurality of textual forms within *HL*'s pages and the narrative frame that renders them recuperable as story. Interpretations of Jackson's literary gesture along thematic or synthetic lines need the clarity afforded by this detailed blending-based analysis to venture beyond the negative conclusions that she "rejects" or "problematizes" conventional narrative, identity, subjectivity, or morality. For instance, within the discourse of narrative theory Jackson has demonstrated how narration itself can not only conform (or not) to preexisting conceptions of narrator and narrating activity, but can also create new subject positions that can spur forward such projects as Richardson's typology in *Unnatural Voices*.

Working from the moral philosophy of Levinas, Foucault, and Adorno, Judith Butler argues for a paradoxical conception that portrays self as neither fully singular nor irrecuperably plural. Jackson provides a concrete version of this paradox, in the form of Nora and Blanche's

singular-but-plural subjectivity. By analyzing that subjectivity in terms of a cognitive blend, built up directly out of the story-world, I have attempted to venture beyond the negative "neither/nor" and into the middle position it delineates, the "both/and." Again, I use the term "negative" not in the pejorative sense, but rather to indicate dissatisfaction with the available options, rather than an attempt to satisfy the requirements of both The gradient of responsibility suggested in the previous section—between those acts for which Nora/Blanche should, may, and cannot become responsible—seems to fulfill Butler's recommendation in favor of "[s]uspending the demand for self-identity or, more particularly, for complete coherence" (42), but without sliding from there into a complete *incoherence*, an indeterminacy of "selfhood" that would render "responsibility" inapplicable.[63] Jackson presents a fairly extraordinary series of circumstances in order to attain her both/and conception, and a full reading of the ethical and moral consequences of the resultant concept will require an additional layer of argument, connecting the alternate USA more clearly with "reality."

This argument is already latent within my analysis, for while the story-level materials seem extraordinary, the cognitive sea-changes for which they prompt have a broader application. The transformative integration of incommensurable stories into a narratable trauma, which produces the both/and "Together" blend, adapts quite easily to non-twofers—as Nora's friend Audrey puts it, "It's for anyone with a dual subject position" (93), and "[o]nly a twofer would think that there was such a thing as *being* single" (367). This integrative transformation is also a cognitive form sought out with striking clarity in recent work on agency, and it brings to life—performs, one might say—Butler's contention that "ethical agency is neither fully determined nor radically free" (19; see also a reformulation in Chambers and Carver 88), as well as

[63] This is the general drift of Pöhlmann's article (see e.g. para 17).

Chambers and Carver's addendum, that "the body serves both to constrain and to enable our capacity for action" (67). These "both/and" configurations recur in Luhman's analysis of structural and individual agency through his concept of "structural coupling" (see Shackelford 67), in Bakhtin's understanding of the necessity and impossibility of narrativization (see Erdinast-Vulcan 12), and most explicitly in Diana Coole's recent emphasis on a way of combining free will and determinism without confusing the terms or relying on "oscillations" between them. *HL* begins, then, to point the way toward a both/and position with regard to these celebrated opposing poles, a position that the present project will take up in terms of narratorial unreliability in Chapter Four.

In much the same way as *HL*'s complex cognitive form allows for a "suspension" of ethical demands that is not simultaneously paralyzing, the novel also suggests an intervention into the discourse on the subject of postmodern fiction. Brian McHale puts the point most starkly, in his distinction between a modernist focus on epistemology, which he playfully dubs "paranoia," and a postmodernist "antiparanoid" focus on ontology (81-2, 89, 151, 186). By fracturing the story-world with "ontological pluralizers," McHale argues, novels such as *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow* work to encourage "negative capability" (82; he draws the phrase from Keats), a readerly talent for allowing paradoxical works to remain just that: paradoxical, not amenable at some level to being read as narrative. In his work on a narrative theory of the "cognitive sublime," Abbott echoes this sense of salubrious ambiguity: "There is a deep knowledge in not knowing what is going on, but it is rarely attained" (139). Furthermore, McClellan reads this kind of process as central to Jackson's work, lauding in *PG* its ability to train the reader's "power to employ and enjoy inconclusivity, to resist closure and containment,

to engage with yet resist the text and its narrative" (106). I would not dispute that Jackson's concern in *HL* remains in some way "ontological," but as the preceding sections suggest, I do not see her encouraging "negative capability." She uses narrative to suggest formally and cognitively specifiable modes of reading that combine ontologically plural indeterminacy (in the multiple completions of the combined-story "Not Exactly Nora" blend) with a narratable ontological coherence (in the second-order combined-story "Trauma and Recovery" blend). She encourages a *positive* capability to recognize alternate, unfamiliar cognitive assemblies of self. A dynamic model of narrative reading—such as, perhaps, the blending-model advanced in this dissertation—can clearly articulate the mental movement by which such "assemblies of self" become legible in this way. In our long tour through *HL*'s intricacies, we have been able to see in detail the transitions from individual sentence-level linguistic interpretation to aggregate conceptual consequences, allowing the present analysis to describe, rather than merely assert, the work's ambitious formal innovations.

I see in Jackson's encouragement of a "positive capability" a direct and probably by now very clear argument with regard to *HL*'s position in gender, identity, and (dis)ability studies. For all of the novel's parodies and Nora's acerbic wit,[64] the position sketched above seems by and large friendly to constructivist approaches that aim to free us from our subjection to pernicious normativity. The narrator's progression through trauma to recovery involves an acceptance of what Butler would call a constitutive otherness within herself, and this progression encourages the reader, in turn, to accept the narrator's alternative mode of being-in-the-world. This acceptance does not consist simply in an abandonment of demands for coherence and

[64] Parodies even target Butler herself, whose style and substance appear within the pamphlets and Venn-Diagram-inspired discourse of Vyv Hornbeck. Jackson credits Butler, as well as Avita Ronell, with the inspiration for these elements (439).

responsibility—for a self-reflexive narrative account—but rather a remodeling, a reformulation of those demands to better fit the experiences made visible in the final shift, from disintegrative to integrative conceptions of "Nora/Blanche."

I leave for future studies the logical extension of this argument to encompass the novel's status as dialogue between women; the more perilous ground for Jackson's textual claims lies, I believe, in (dis)ability studies. My sketch of *HL*'s cognitive form and potential interpretations runs the risk of suggesting that Jackson puts the extraordinary body on display instrumentally, as a means of achieving artistic and theoretical goals. As Sara Hosey warns, fiction featuring extraordinary bodies risks "the reduction of characters to their impairments" (47), a concern that Myser and Clark also echo in their work on the portrayal of real conjoined twins. Ellen Samuels argues that even Butler herself risks marginalizing the extra-ordinary body when she suggests that the language of gender- and identity-construction deforms or damages the human subject (72-3). Insofar as *HL* indulges in a display of the narrator's body, depicting her shape clearly and precisely, Jackson does run this risk, but much of the narration also emphasizes the injustice in treating such bodies as simply exotic or as actively deformed. This is, indeed, the unjust attitude for which the narrator seems to become most responsible. The above authors also articulate a critical demand for interventions, particularly within artistic and medical discourse. Myser and Clark describe the fate of the surgically separated twins Katie and Eilish: "Although it remains unclear how to count apparently multiple subjects who share one body and who are presumably shaped by that shared visceral experience in incalculable ways, this regulatory ideal legislates and polices the simplifying requirement that there be only one person per body" (46). The more capacious cognitive model for the relationship between selves and bodies sketched

here suggests a fruitful way to adapt Butler's work on gender to the partly parallel theories in (dis)ability studies—an adaptation for which Samuels and Myser and Clark cautiously advocate.

The present chapter has formulated a combined indeterminacy-and-coherence very different from that built into *Pale Fire*. Where Nabokov produces incommensurable worlds and leaves the reader in a (delightful) state of indecision, Jackson uses *HL*'s incommensurabilities[65] to propel the reader toward an integrative conclusion. *Pale Fire*'s world fits neither John Shade's personal realism nor Charles Kinbote's parasitic fantasy; *HL*'s world accommodates both singular and plural subjectivity simultaneously. My purpose here is not to argue that either approach is superior, but rather to more clearly distinguish Jackson's narrative project from Nabokov's. *HL* and the texts ahead tend to be easily labeled "postmodernist" or "experimental" in a way that would collapse them into the same category as *PF*, a conclusion as unjust to their form as that which might call *HL* "merely" genre sci-fi. In the conclusions above, I have suggested far-reaching implications for narrative agency, and it will be the task of Chapter Four, on Percival Everett's *Erasure*, to articulate that "both/and" conclusion. Before I can pursue such an argument, however, I will need to embark first upon an opposition entailed by the cognitive frames for the self as well as for agency. Much as *HL*'s complex subjectivity integrates the binary poles of singularity and plurality, Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions* tackles the seeming opposition between subjective and objective time. It is to this particular "both/and" that the present project turns next.

[65] I draw the word from Donald Ault's work on the illuminated books of William Blake; his point is that we should not consider things that do not cohere as simply "inconsistencies." The ontological focus of Ault's account would seem to present Blake as one of McHale's ontology-obsessed post-modernists *avant la letre*.

III. "Allways our rush returning renewed"[1]: Temporal Paradox in *Only Revolutions*

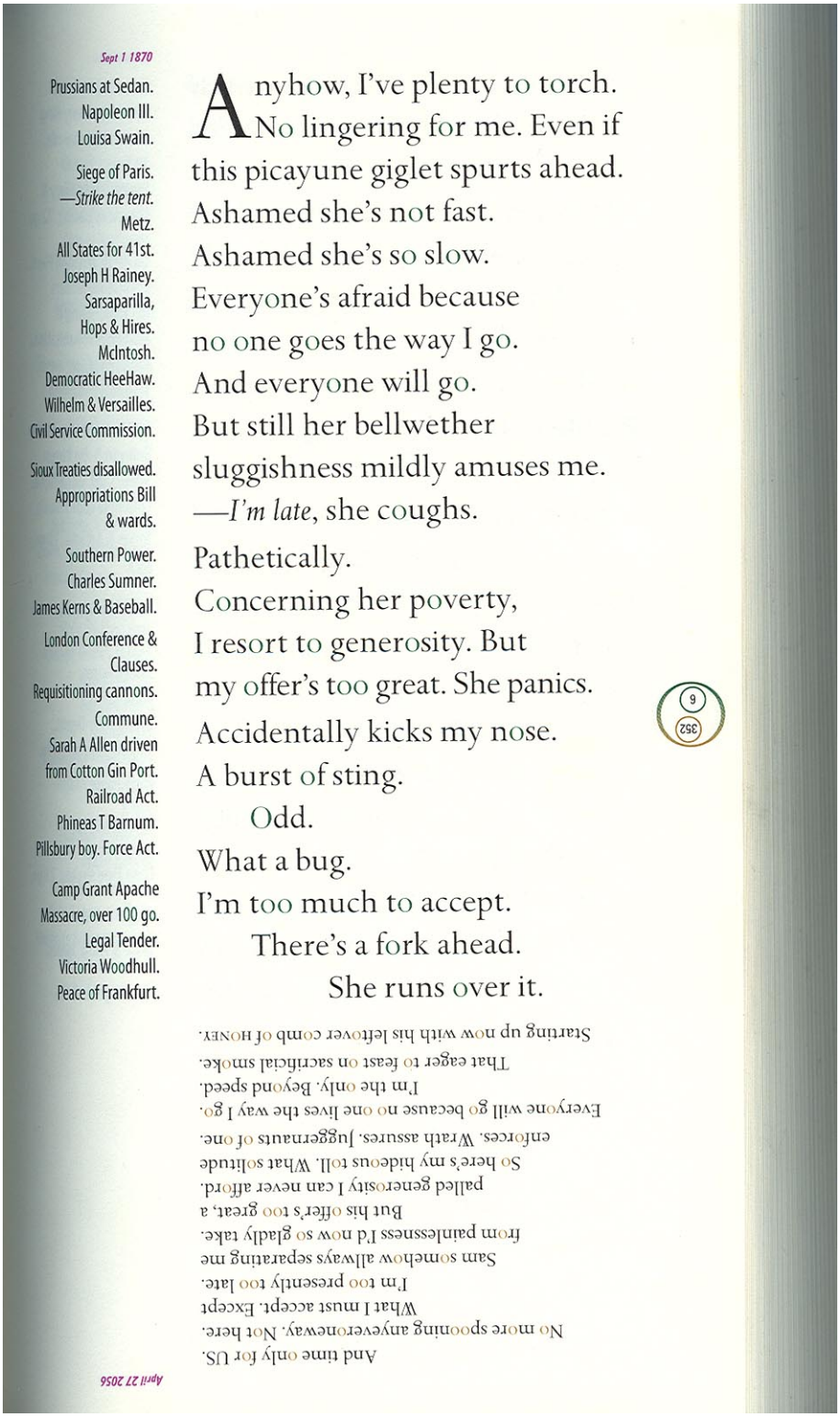
Like *Half Life*, Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions* sets out to confound and complicate our habits of reading-out story from printed text, and its complex form also requires the analytical tools afforded by a blending-theory of narrative. Both texts present narrators engaged in a process of self-construction, as they seek to accommodate their account of themselves to their memories and emotions, and also to their anticipated reception. Where *Half Life* uses the ambiguity of the self-referential "I" to pressure the reader to recognize and accept an otherness within the narrator's self (a plurality within the narrative's singularity) *Only Revolutions* uses a story-level time-paradox to address the relationship between the individuated narrative-self and a broader story-world history (a narrative singularity within a putatively non-narrative plurality). The book has two front covers, which lead to two complete narratives by two narrators, the teenage lovers Sam and Hailey. Their texts proceed in opposite directions through the pages, and in the gutters of each page, on the side closest to the binding, runs a non-narrative timeline, or "chronomosaic," spanning a total of two centuries. The twofold question about "how to read" *Only Revolutions* begins here, with a decision about where to start, how to proceed, and how to understand the relationship between the chronomosaics and the narrative. As Sam and Hailey begin to differ over details that also seem to signify that they live in different historical periods, the second, ethical question about "how to read" their relationship to their story-world(s) also sharpens. In this chapter I will argue that the text in *Only Revolutions* (*OR*)

[1] *Only Revolutions* (H360). Each *OR* page number cited here includes a letter corresponding to the narrator, Sam or Hailey. When their texts do not differ, or when a direct analogy or disanalogy is being proposed, the page number will appear with no letter, signifying a reference to both pages at once.

prompts for a second-order story-blend that allows the reader to accept simultaneously a view of time as both subjective and objective—but without producing the corrosive irony of postmodernist novels such as Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, or the reassurance of more recent returns to classic historical nuance in fiction and criticism—and without embedding a teleology drawn from dialectical historical models. Where theorists such as Ned Lukacher would see such a paradoxical "both/and" assertion as an ironic attempt to maintain an attitude of suspension (18, 116) toward the two time concepts, fully accepting neither,[2] I argue that *OR* attempts to create in the reader's mind a story-world that accepts both. In so doing, the novel invites the reader to see the narrators' storytelling act (their act of "emplotment," in Paul Ricoeur's terms) as an escape-attempt: they try to "escape-from" a divided story bound to disparate external historical contexts, and to "escape-to" a shared subjective story of mutual commitment. Danielewski's unique manipulation of narrative temporality asks the reader to see the "escape" as simultaneously subjectively innocent *and* historically irresponsible. He also portrays this escape as a practice of U.S.-American self-narration (and therefore self-production) that is explicable in terms of earnest needs at the individual level, and yet also disturbing in its collective characteristics.

In almost every sense—physical, graphical, compositional—*OR* requires the reader to make basic choices about "how to read." Each of the book's twin covers opens on a colophon, a title page, a dedication, and "page 1." Each "page 1" has text in a large font, and what seems to be footnote-like text in a tiny font, but on closer inspection, the "footnote" turns out to be "page 360," upside-down (see Figure 21). Each page also carries a timeline consisting of a date and a

[2] For further examples of the same approach, see Danvers's "contrarium" (349), Todorov's non-constructive modern novel (270), Brian McHale's discussion of "negative capability" (82), Froman's discussion of Lyotard's *The Inhuman* (216), Waugh's and Hutcheon's versions of "metafiction" (Waugh 6; Hutcheon 485), and especially Abbott's recent narratological concept of the "cognitive sublime" (138-9).



Sept 1 1870

Prussians at Sedan.
Napoleon III.
Louisa Swain.

Siege of Paris.
—*Strike the tent.*
Metz.
All States for 41st.
Joseph H Rainey.
Sarsaparilla,
Hops & Hires.
McIntosh.
Democratic HeeHaw.
Wilhelm & Versailles.
Civil Service Commission.

Sioux Treaties disallowed.
Appropriations Bill
& wards.

Southern Power.
Charles Sumner.
James Kerns & Baseball.

London Conference &
Clauses.
Requisitioning cannons.
Commune.
Sarah A Allen driven
from Cotton Gin Port.
Railroad Act.
Phineas T Barnum.
Pillsbury boy. Force Act.

Camp Grant Apache
Massacre, over 100 go.
Legal Tender.
Victoria Woodhull.
Peace of Frankfurt.

April 27 2056

Anyhow, I've plenty to torch.
No lingering for me. Even if
this picayune giglet spurts ahead.
Ashamed she's not fast.
Ashamed she's so slow.
Everyone's afraid because
no one goes the way I go.
And everyone will go.
But still her bellwether
sluggishness mildly amuses me.
—*I'm late*, she coughs.
Pathetically.
Concerning her poverty,
I resort to generosity. But
my offer's too great. She panics.
Accidentally kicks my nose.
A burst of sting.
Odd.
What a bug.
I'm too much to accept.
There's a fork ahead.
She runs over it.

9
352

Starting up now with his leftover comb of HONEY.
That eager to feast on sacrificial smoke.
I'm the only. Beyond speed.
Everyone will go because no one lives the way I go.
enforces. Wrath assures. Juggernauts of one.
So here's my hideous toll. What solitude
palled generosity I can never afford.
But his offer's too great, a
from painlessness I'd now so gladly take.
Sam somehow allways separating me
I'm too presently too late.
What I must accept. Except
No more spooning anyveroneway. Not here.
And time only for US.

Figure 21. *OR* page S9 (H352)

strip of tiny quotations and other information-snippets along the gutter on the inner side (left on the recto, right on the verso), a set of materials that the colophon calls "chronomosaics." Even before beginning the novel(s), the reader faces a choice: each of the two title pages attributes the subsequent text to a different narrator, Sam and Hailey. Which narrator's text do I read first? Once I have started, how do I proceed? A reader might easily decide to read the whole of one narrative before turning the book over and going back through the other. The datelines seem to support this idea: in Sam's text the dates begin on "Nov 22 1863" (S1) and Hailey's on "Nov 22 1963" (H1). Upon embarking on the second narrator's text, however, the reader discovers that the stories are symmetrical, and share many existents and events. An alternate approach thus also proves rewarding: the reader may read a chapter in one direction, then spin the book around and reading the same distance in the other direction, giving equal time to Sam and Hailey.

At the level of the individual lines, the text proves challenging. Sam's text begins in a narrow column: "Haloes! Haleskarth! / Contraband! / I can walk away / from anything. / Everyone loves the Dream but I kill it. / **Bald Eagles** soar over me: —*Reveille Rebel!* / I jump free this weel. / On fire. Blaze a breeze. / I'll devastate the World" (S1, emphases in original). At first the text may not look like narrative at all, filled as it is with expostulations and free-associations; reviewers have commented that Sam speaks in a dialect that has much in common with beat poetry, rap, or bebop, and his prose looks like poetry on the page. And yet, particularly if the reader alternates chapters, each text accretes a sense of story-form, as the two teenage lovers describe meeting one another, finding a car, and driving like mad for the horizon.[3] Theirs is a "road-novel," but markedly different from those in the Kerouac tradition or the U.S.-

[3] As in the case of *Pale Fire*, *OR* comes packaged as "a novel," but the colophon also calls it "The Democracy of Two, Set Out & Chronologically Arranged."

American filmic genre, with its episodic, linear story. Sam and Hailey journey in circles, in every sense. The final page of each text points the way to the first page of the other, the dual page numbers revolve around one another graphically, and the book itself spins as the reader moves from one character's discourse[4] to the other's.

In spite of the dizzying graphical complexity and those troubling timelines, the two stories—Sam's and Hailey's—seem to share a multitude of characters, setting elements, and events. Sam and Hailey each narrate in the present tense, with no analepsis or prolepsis. They respond to events with apparent immediacy, emotionally and sometimes almost incoherently, but their experiences also run parallel to one another. They meet, find a car (48-9), and begin a rollicking road trip across the eastern United States. Their voices have the same insouciant, playful tone, and the same carefully orchestrated formal coherence (90 words to each page of each narrative, adding up to 360 words per two-page spread). They survive a bureaucratic nightmare of a hospital that almost gets them both killed (99-120) and unrewarding restaurant work in St. Louis (146-215). They get married illegally (296), but their car breaks down, forcing them to climb a mountain on foot (312), where one of them dies (328).[5] The final pages (359-60) of each account prompt the reader to start over, and the top right-hand corner of page 359 holds the *OR* logo, twin vertical lines surrounded by a colored circle—and the circle bears the *other* narrator's color.[6] Throughout their story, they seem to flee from a series of threatening characters and encroaching worldly demands, making their escape across the American Midwest

[4] As noted in Chapter 1, I reserve the term "text" for the physical artifact itself, and the term "discourse" for an artifact being read as narration by some narrator. Thus, there is no "the" discourse in the way that there is "the" text of *OR*; there is only "Hailey's" or "Sam's discourse."

[5] Some reviewers summarize the book as simply an "American road novel" (*The New Yorker*'s review, DuShane, Dwyer, the July *Kirkus* review, Luce), while others describe the segmentation into travel, work, and dissipation (e.g. Patterson, O'Hagan, Poole).

[6] I read the lines as the twinned narrators' first-person pronouns, set side by side and surrounded by their circular story-world.

in one or more automobiles.

The stories share so much that it is as though they tell one story from different perspectives, as though they share a world, and yet in the margins the datelines obstinately insist that they live in different centuries, never less than some four decades apart. Reading them in alternating chapters, their accounts seem to be the same story, and yet seem incommensurable in that they differ over many details, and over how the story ends: each narrator describes the other's death. Reading them in sequence does no better, for it creates duplicate couples undergoing duplicate and tightly parallel experiences that stretch their sixteenth year across a century. Partly as a result of this incommensurability, readers will probably have a difficult time with the second sense of the "how to read" question: it remains unclear whether the narrators' "escape" is successful, not to mention to what extent their adventure should be read as admirable, irresponsible, or in some way illegible in such moral terms. It therefore seems theoretically possible to abjure story-building altogether, and consider *OR* as a member of a non-narrative genre, but I argue that the symmetries and disanalogies reward narrative treatment. In the sections that follow, I will apply the basic blending-model of narrative reading to *OR*, outlining the topology of the four simultaneous cognitive blends involved in reading this text for story, and demonstrating how these blends produce and resolve their incommensurabilities. The text prompts for an extremely complex story-level process in which the reader must simultaneously perform integrating (compressing) acts that produce from the text a sense of "story-world," but also disintegrating (decompressing) acts that allow her to use story-world conclusions to reinterpret textual elements (see Figure 22). Each new incorporation of textual details modifies the conception of the story-level whole.

The blending-model of narrative reading proposed in Chapter One allows me to distinguish between the kinds of blend at work here, beginning with the simple formulation of a "direct-story" blend from the text and graphics on the page (in Figure 22, "S on S&H" and "H on H&S"). This process quickly produces striking analogies and disanalogies in Sam's and Hailey's stories, prompting the reader to rebuild not only their accounts, but also the story-world they seem to share. As demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, this kind of story-world is not an independent, pre-existing ontological horizon, but rather what I call a "combined-story" blend that integrates the two stories. It is a blend that has (at least) two completions, one a shared world produced by blending Sam's and Hailey's stories according to the frames for basic physical action ("S&H-Synchronized"), and the other a world that separates their accounts by accepting the datelines from the non-narrative "chronomosaic" timeline that fills the book's margins (I call this blend "S&H Sequential"). This is the novel's governing paradox: insofar as

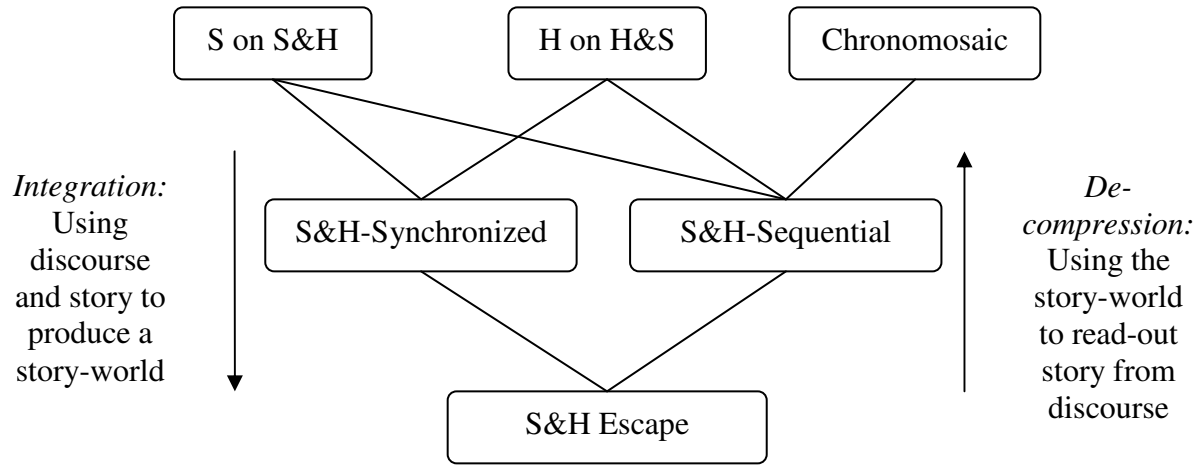


Figure 22. Story Blends in *OR*[7]

[7] For clarity, this figure omits the level of text itself, as well as the initial discourse-"parsing" blend in favor of the story levels that form Chapter Three's primary focus.

the reader construes the text as depicting a shared world, Sam and Hailey tell "the same" story, but insofar as the reader forces their stories to conform to the guttered chronomosaics, the stories separate into separate centuries. From the sequential perspective, the duplication and stretching effect looks anomalous; from the synchronized perspective, the timeline looks anomalous.

Both of these story-level blends result directly from the simpler process of reading the text for story, but their mutual exclusion, as well as the fact that neither seems to produce a "realistic" story-world, make the reading process uncomfortable, and send the reader on a quest for further "global insight" (see Fauconnier & Turner [F&T] 77). Indeed, the two combined-story blends share enough cognitive structure to prompt the reader to combine them. The reader can recognize the narrating act itself as a version of one of the story's primary action-frames: that of escape. The Synchronized blend presents a story of shared adventure, the narrative they try to "escape-to." Here, they hit the road together for a year, beset by troubles at a local, mostly manageable scale. The Sequential blend presents a story of separation and narrative isolation, the narrative they try to "escape-from." Here they each narrate a trip that happens in a different century, with a different Sam or Hailey, and their experiences ground them in history, but also stretch each journey to fill a century. By understanding Sam and Hailey as escaping-by-narrating, the reader can read the novel according to both temporalities at once, producing a "second-order combined-story" blend ("S&H Escape"). This blend makes the text's incommensurability meaningful by allowing the reader to see their escape as both an innocent act of commitment (to one another) and an irresponsible act of flight (from a larger social context). Chapter Three demonstrates how the text prompts for each of these simultaneous blends:

I. The "direct-story" blend by which the reader produces story from each discourse

(I later call the stories "S on S&H" and "H on H&S").

II. The "combined-story" blend by which the reader produces the sense of shared story-world events and existents ("S&H-Synchronized").

III. The "combined-story" blend by which the reader accounts for the datelines in the chronomosaics ("S&H-Sequential").

IV. The "second-order combined-story" blend by which the reader blends the two combined-stories, and with them, two temporalities ("S&H Escape").

Direct-Story Blends: Reading OR *as Narrative*

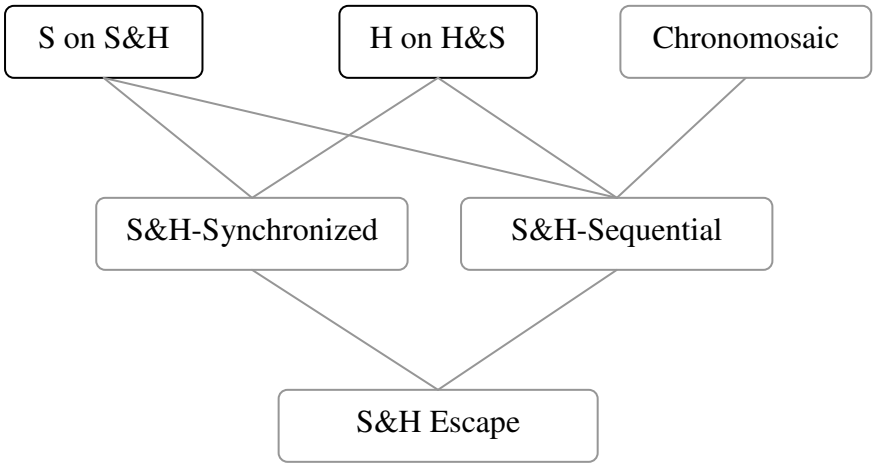


Figure 23. Blends considered in Reading *OR* as Narrative

Danielewski's first novel, *House of Leaves*, has already received widespread recognition as a genre-bending horror story that foregrounds the act of interpretation, but *OR* has yet to

develop the same critical audience, in part thanks to its even more ambitious formal structure.[8] Its frequent line breaks, playful diction, and unorthodox orthography give it a certain kinship with the "long poem" form, as well as perhaps the ludic prose of *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*. *Only Revolutions* does, however, inescapably prompt the reader to recognize characters, events, and most importantly, Sam's and Hailey's narrating acts. Frequent and stable pronouns, verbs, and tense-aspect structure[9] allow the reader to match these textual elements to the cognitive frame for narration and story elements (see Figure 23).[10] For example, Sam's reader should have no trouble reading statements such as "She panics. Accidentally kicks my nose" (S9; see also Figure 21) as narrative, recognizing a situation in which the narrator, Sam, encounters a woman who seems less emotionally stable and flails about with her feet, dealing him a kick he is prepared to forgive. Hailey's discourse, in the same sector of the same page at the book's opposite end, prompts for a reconstruction of similar existents and events, but disagrees about how they come together. She recounts Sam's direct discourse, "*—Okay, you can be my slave*," followed by her reaction: "My flying kick nicks his nose. / A warning" (H9). Both accounts are autodiegetic, featuring each narrator as a character in the story, and both also seem to feature the *other* narrator as a character. Sam and Hailey seem to inhabit "the same" story-world insofar as the reader's reconstructed existents and even some aspects of the events seem identical, but they organize the material differently, producing different accounts of that world.

It is worth noting the odd qualities to their words and the events they prompt the reader to

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[8] For *House of Leaves*, see Hansen on mediation and embodiment, Hayles on hypertextuality and subjectivity, and McCafferty and Gregory's interview with Danielewski about the book's origins. According to one judge, *OR*'s inaccessibility made sure the book attained only short-list status for the National Book Award in 2006 (Wiggins para 14, 19).

[9] See Fleischman and Fludernik for further discussion of these indicators of narrativity; see also Ricoeur's discussion of the "quasi-past" created by the use of the preterite (2: 74).

[10] Ricoeur calls these frames a "preliminary competence" (1: 54); see F&T for more on frames for character (252), temporality (96), and action (40).

reconstruct. Where the narrators in *Half Life* and even *Pale Fire* order their discourses according to a recognizable tradition (the memoir- and diary-forms in the former; the poem and scholarly annotations in the latter), the narrators in *OR* seem determined to be less confined. The words leap freely between abstract notions (narrating in an allegorical mode) and physical existents (narrating in a more directly mimetic mode), as when, as Hailey puts it, "Angry Mangy / Naked Urges riot towards me. / —*Them!*—" (H28). Both narrators describe glimpses of totem-like animals (Sam's "bald eagles," above) and plants (in Hailey's text) that have little to do with the action. Both narrators also slide queasily from one description of an existent to another: their automobile, for example, is a different make and model every time they mention it. That is to say, *OR* is inescapably *mimetic* (particularly in Paul Ricoeur's or Monika Fludernik's sense), insofar as it relies for its story-level coherence upon the reader's concepts for action in the physical world, but it is not exactly *realistic*, insofar as it intentionally deviates from most realist narrative traditions (particularly those of the road-novel, from Kerouac to McCarthy), not to mention most readers' likely sense of what "reality" looks like. In this respect, *OR* may seem more an "epic" than a "novel"—a distinction to be explored more fully below.

In the example cited above, the language remains relatively clear, allowing the reader to recreate a configuration of events that make an amusing kind of sense. To produce her sense of Hailey as a character in Sam's story, the reader has to collect from Sam's discourse a certain number of "she" incidences with the name "Hailey," assigning her a "character" role. Likewise, the "I" incidences align with the name "Sam," but he fills two roles at once, that of character and that of organizer of the text, the narrator. Verb forms, too, prompt for a reconstruction of state and action, allowing the reader to reconstruct the actions and events in which these characters

participate. This is a single-scope blend (see F&T 126): the mind combines linguistic elements from the "discourse" input with conceptual frames (characters, existents, actions) from the "story" input, according to the organizing frame for story (see Figure 24). Elaborating this blend means carrying forward all of the blended materials produced by reading each line of the text, reorganizing the story with each new piece of information—it is an ongoing process.[11]

As in *Pale Fire* and *Half Life*, the conceptual frame for story must include not only the events Sam narrates, but also his act of narration.[12] As a character, Sam is a creature of story, but as narrator he creates the very discourse that describes him. His narrating act—Ricoeur's "emplotment," Chatman's "selection process"—is part of the story for which the text prompts by being read-as narrative.[13] By reading-as narrative, the reader uses new discourse information to modify her sense of Sam's character, and then uses her sense of the narrating act to modify the way she assimilates discourse information into his story, in a feedback loop.

In *OR*, each narrator's text prompts for a story, and each story includes a narrating act. These stories seem to refer to the same set of events, but they differ over the details. From Sam's discourse, the reader creates Sam's account of his and Hailey's experiences (I label this blend "S on S&H"), and learns that Sam sees his offer of subjugation as "generosity," and Hailey's kick as accidental. In Hailey's version (H on H&S), Hailey sees Sam's offer as an insult, and gives him a warning kick to put him in his place. Reading the discourses side by side

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[11] For the cognate concept of a "megablend" see F&T (151, 283-8).

[12] Ricoeur also restates this point several times: "the narrator in fact determines a present [. . .] which is just as fictive as the instance of discourse constituting the narrative utterance" (2: 98; see also 2: 5; 2: 76). For variant versions of this point, see Pavel's possible-worlds theory (10), Peter Brook's definition of "plot" (13), and of course Fludernik's "mediated experientiality" (311).

[13] Some functional approaches to narrative might insist upon keeping his narrating function separate from his performing or acting "character-function"—see for example Heinze's discussion (287), as well as Pier's discussion of the Russian formalists' term *sjuzhet*. The blending model construes story as precisely that construct which, in autodiegetic narration, produces a character-narrator as that entity which performs both functions.

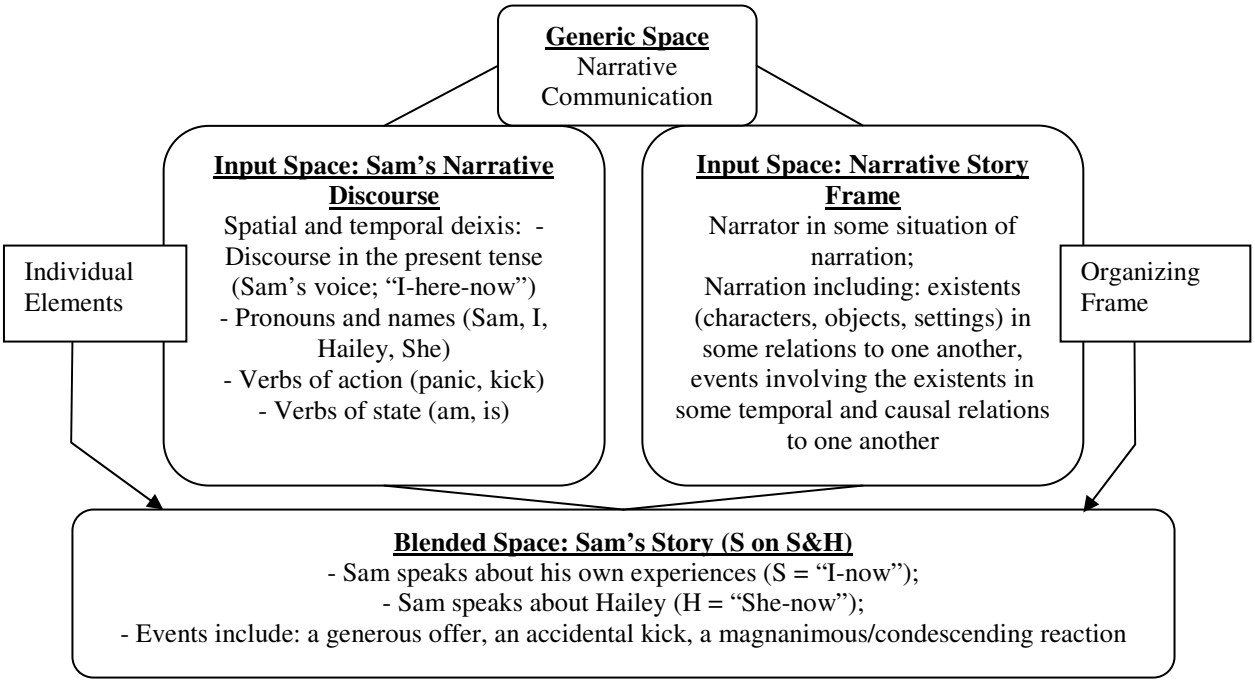

Figure 24. "Direct-story" blend for Sam's story

highlights disanalogies as much as analogies, suggesting that the narrators share a story-world, and that the disagreements result from differences in the characters' perspective, their interpretations and evaluations of the story-world events in which they partake. The discourses prompt the reader to blend the stories, following a method similar to the one in *Pale Fire*, compressing the "vital relations" of analogy and disanalogy (see F&T 99-101) to produce both the shared world and the unique perspectives.

This is a distinct blend from the one that produces the two accounts of events (S on S&H and H on H&S), and as I have suggested above, it has more than one possible completion. Insofar as the reader considers the analogies and disanalogies between the two narrators' accounts, and, therefore, the sense that they share a story-world of physical action, she will read the stories as though they describe subjective perspectives on a single set of existents and events.

This blend makes the chronomosaics anomalous and directs the reader's attention away from them; I call it "S&H-Synchronized." If the reader attempts to take into account the timelines, to "date" the events in each story, she will find the parallels between the stories anomalous, and will read them as though they describe a *pair* of (epistemically prior, ontologically distinct) stories of existents and events, wherein Hailey's story begins only as Sam's ends. I call this blend "S&H-Sequential."

Both of these reading modes operate throughout the reading process, but they produce a confusing reading experience, in part because they contradict each other so thoroughly, and in part because they are different cognitive processes—different kinds of blending activity. By creating each blend, the reader produces incommensurably different story-worlds from the same text. I will outline these blends one after the other, beginning with S&H-Synchronized, but neither is "prior" in any sense of the term. I would hazard that readers who read alternating chapters are more likely to read according to the Synchronized blend first, whereas those who read the entire narratives one after the other will tend to create the Sequential blend first—but each method creates such thoroughgoing internal contradictions that all readers will probably turn to the alternate blend in search of answers.

Combined-Story Blend: Subjective Duration (S&H-Synchronized)

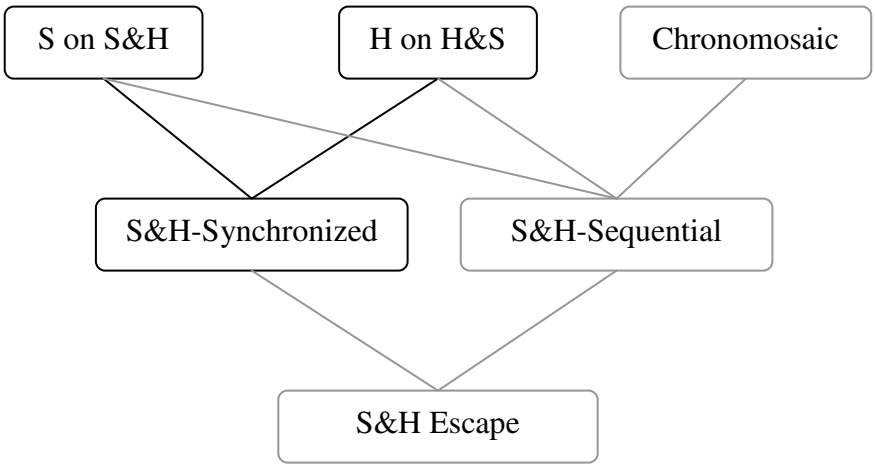

Figure 25. Blends considered in S&H Synchronized

Paul Ricoeur argues that "time becomes human time to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode" (1: 52), and this is precisely what the S&H-Synchronized blend (see Figure 25) portrays: the humanized time of subjective experience. The differences in how Sam and Hailey interpret their shared world emphasize their distinct subjectivities, and their gradually changing attitudes stretch their perspectives over a lived duration. This concept appears under many different guises from Aristotle to Derrida, and I cannot cover its history here, but as Ned Lukacher's *Time Fetishes* and Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* each claim, "subjective time" always emphasizes a variety of perceptual and mental experiences of extension and change. The human mind perceives time's tripartite extension (past, present, future) in one moment, according to analogies and disanalogies between memory, perception, and prediction.[14] Time itself, in this guise, is built out of subjective experience.

[14] For further discussion along this line, see Ricoeur's discussion of Augustine's treatment of time in the *Confessions* (10-16). For the cognate version in blending terms, see Turner's description of time as "a moving actor" (48), and F&T's discussion of the "vital relations" of change (94), time (96), cause-effect (97), and their interactions (101).

The narrative development in the Synchronized blend engages directly with what Ricoeur calls the "aporetics" of time (1: 71), proffering to the reader a sense of "time as continuous duration" (Lukacher 5),[15] a progression of seasons that mirrors the character-arcs, from spring through summer (*OR* 46, 59, 122, 129) and autumn (232, 302) to winter (338). The book's graphical presentation mirrors the character-arc again: each narrator begins the tale by sounding off in a large font, with numerous but short lines, and each ends in tiny letters and fewer (but longer) lines. They progress from the gleeful solitude of youth to the lonely solitude of bereavement,[16] and thus might be seen to mature—particularly since they each also move from self-aggrandizement toward a growing respect for one another. Insofar as this constitutes a mutual awareness, and not just individual abjection, the Synchronized blend presents their adventure as an understandable and valuable undertaking, a shared temporal journey staged as a narrative dialogue.

The reader reads according to this blend by recognizing story-level analogies and disanalogies between Sam's and Hailey's accounts. For example, after they have been traveling together for a while Sam and Hailey join a party that devolves into an orgy. Both describe undressings, but where Sam enjoys finding "Scores to defile. Sweet, naughty, / and rude" (S91), Hailey reacts with shock: "Byebye panties?!" (H91). Their differing reactions[17] to the group-sex circumstances are remarkable:

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[15] Lukacher shares Ricoeur's emphasis on aporia (5-6, 17, 20 and *passim*), and also occasionally uses the Greek term "chronos" (x), as does another familiar time-theorist, Frank Kermode (see 47). Ricoeur calls it "extended" time (2: 101) as well as "chronological" (1: 66).

[16] The animal and vegetable "totems," among other things, accompany Sam and Hailey before they meet on page 5; in *OR* "allone," as they spell it, is always a matter of relation to each other. Each returns to this state again when the other dies on page 328. The kind of linear progression sketched here, from youth to death, suggests the sense of diminishment that leads Lukacher to explain time with Freud's conception of the fetish, a response to fears of castration (see Lukacher 6; Chapter 6).

[17] Poole also remarks in his review that the narrators "systematically contradict each other in central details" (para 4); this is probably the kind of example he has in mind.

—Ahhhh.	*—Hey!*
—O.	*—Ouch!*
I'm every pleasure. I am pleasure.	I'm every pang. I am pain.
Every Lower West Side patchjacketed	Every Upper East Side plaidskirted
kid running to discover the worth of	kid running to find the edge of
his life. And everyone seeks to	her worth. And everyone wants to
please me because when I pleasure	conquer me because when I gain
enjoyments surge.	competitions hurt.
Which I allways deserve" (S92).	Which I always desert" (H92).

The twin discourses offer analogies even at the syntactic level, but Sam's story presents a pleasurable experience, while Hailey's represents something nearly violent. These parallels encourage the reader to align and blend Sam's and Hailey's stories, producing a world of events to which they both have access, but which they each perceive differently.

As in *Pale Fire*, this "combined-story" blend takes as its inputs the twin stories, S on S&H, and H on H&S, aligning them via a generic space whose contents might be paraphrased, "A speaker tells the story of Sam and Hailey." The act of speaking events into narrative discourse is the same, *qua* act, in both of the direct-story blends, making S&H-Synchronized a mirror-blend (See Figure 26).[18] Completing this blend produces for the reader the global insight that Hailey and Sam tell different stories because they experience the same events differently, a feat of story-level "parallax" that makes available much more complex readings of their

[18] See Appendix A and F&T (122-3) for further definition and discussion of mirror blends (122-3).

accounts.[19] Taken separately, the "group-sex" passages might be read as relating two entirely different events. Sam generalizes his "deserved" pleasure to "Every [. . .] patchjacketed / kid," and of course his abstract "kid" is male. Hailey describes the pain of becoming someone else's sexual conquest, and her "kid" is "plaidskirted" and female. Already a feminist reading suggests itself, but if both narratives refer to the same shared-world events, this reading is grim: Sam does not, for the moment, register Hailey's distress.[20]

Once this blend has begun, the reader can read "in the blend," understanding elements of each discourse as referring to elements within this shared story-world. This means that most readers will probably remain less conscious of separate "direct-stories" for Sam and Hailey (the S on S&H and H on H&S blends), unless they have already begun to attend to the chronomosaics. Instead of saying that Sam and Hailey tell "separate stories," many readers may prefer to say that they tell different versions of "the same story," and using that conclusion to make inferences about the characters' psychology (their motivations, intentions, etc.) and therefore about why they tell their stories the way they do. All of this cognitive work underlies the familiar terminology associated with "point of view," and accounts for the wide variety of its potential metamorphoses.[21]

These constellations of analogy and disanalogy produce not only a sense that the twin narratives refer to the same worldly events, but also that they follow parallel character-development arcs. Early in the book they each obtain a bracelet, which each regards as

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[19] See Brian McHale (46) for more on narrative parallax, and also Todorov on the reconstruction of the event from differing perspectives (262-3).

[20] A full reading would need more complexity: in the subsequent lines Hailey escapes the orgy and, Sam notices and follows, and they both apologize to one another (94).

[21] On this subject, see for example Genette's discourse-level approach to "perspective" (*Narrative Discourse* 186-90, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 70) and "person" (*ND* 248, *NDR* 101); Fludernik's discussion of "experientiality"; and Richardson's typology in *Unnatural Voices* for some of the panoply of variations.

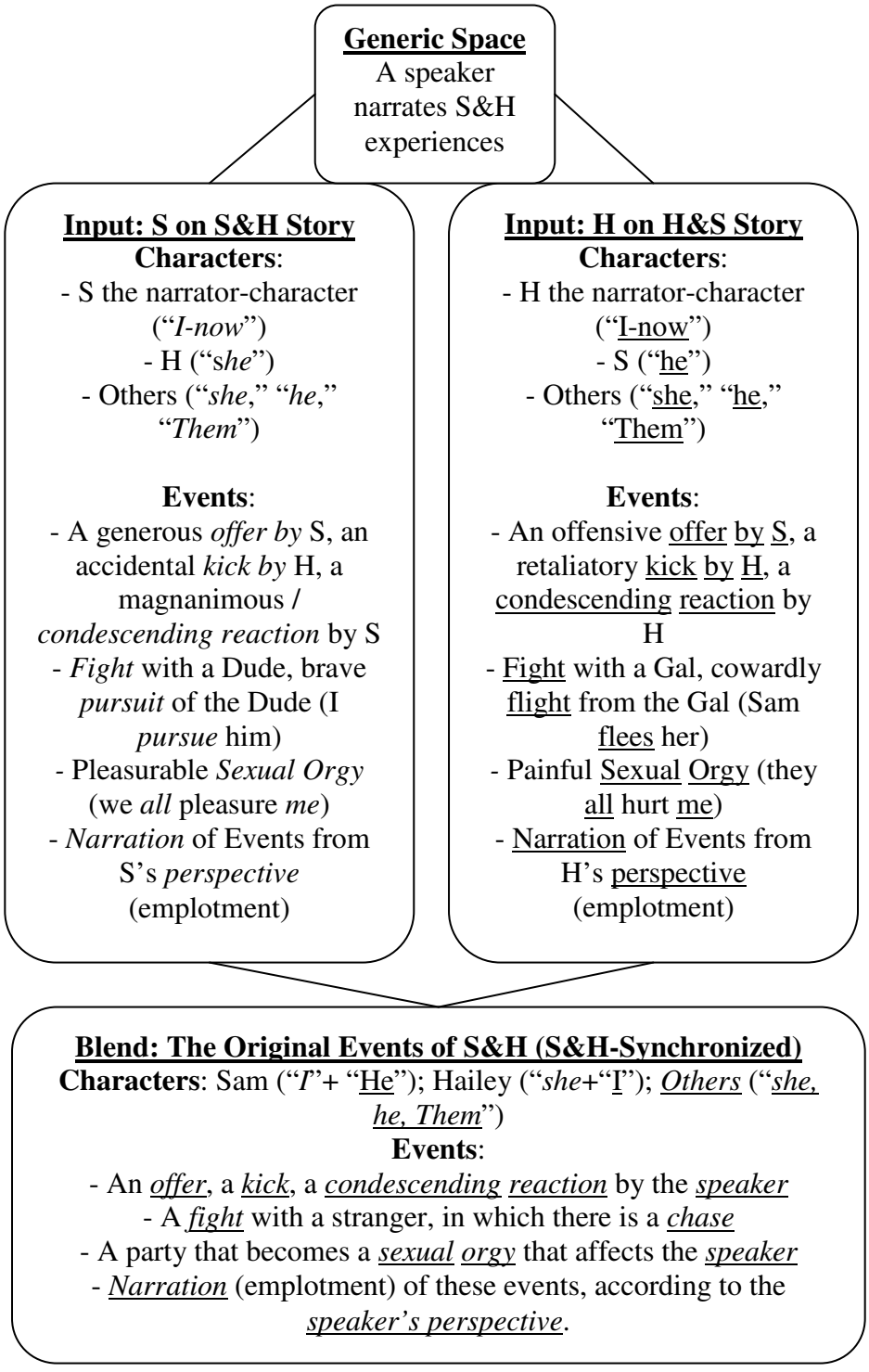

Figure 26. "Combined-story" blend for the S&H-Synchronized story

"Priceless." Each also appraises the other's acquisition as worthless: "How sad," Sam observes, "Around her Leftwrist a Twist of Scat" (S52) and Hailey, "How pitiful. / Around his Leftwrist a Twist of Shit" (H52). The discourse itself runs almost exactly parallel, the judgments the same, the referents inverted. In the second half of each account, the self-appraisal reverses. Worn down by work, each sees the other successfully garnering tips: Sam sees "Lincolns & Hamiltons, palmed underhand. / And while I'm just overalls, gloomy staff, / She's dome hat, bloomers and flats" (S197). Hailey sees "Jacksons & Grants, jacketed smooth. / And while I'm just overalls, a gofer, / he's silk tie, suspenders & loafers" (H197). After the book's midpoint (180-181), each narrator's attitude toward self and other has inverted. In both cases, the reader can avoid paradox by compressing the disanalogies of events into analogies of subjective perspective, producing between the narrators a perfect symmetry of waning self-regard.[22]

These incidents describe an arc of development not only in the speakers' dispositions, but also in their relationship. Initial mutual condescension grades into mutual respect, a transformation that coincides with the novel's center pages (180-181) where Sam and Hailey finally get off work at the same time. They return to their rented room, where they lie in bed together, talk, eat honey, and make love. Here, disanalogies of discourse disappear, and when not recounting dialogue (all untagged now), both accounts speak in the first-person plural. They merge here in their free time, reaffirming their commitment to one another, and afterward each looks to the other with admiration. In the crucible of wage labor, it seems, they shift their stances, learning to value the other—as an intimately familiar individual—more than the self.

[22] Self-aggrandizements include achievements at games (65), bravery (85), and a rescue (134-5); self-abasements include reversed judgments about games (171), "twist" value (286, 306), and a moment when the other carries the speaker (268). They also disagree over whether the kitchen staff hurls at Sam knives or bread-rolls (see 149, 169, 191-2, and *passim*).

Sociopolitical or psychological readings seem incipient here, and would rely for their strength upon the shared world of reference of the S&H-Synchronized blend, and the differences in discourse produced by the narrators' subjective emplotment of that world. The direct-story blend that produces "H on H&S" and "S on S&H" is a single-scope adaptation of text to the cognitive frame for story, whereas the combined-story blend, "S&H-Synchronized" is a mirror blend that produces a new story level. This shift of blending mode should by now feel very familiar: it is not only the same as that which produces the world of John Shade from Shade's poem and Kinbote's commentary in *Pale Fire*, but also appears less problematically in many a tale with multiple narrators.

Only Revolutions does not, however, allow the reader to continue to read comfortably "in the blend." Sam and Hailey do not always seem to be telling a straightforward realist story, which puts them at variance with most novelistic traditions.[23] Indeed, as will become clearer shortly, their accounts seem to develop some of the allegorical and stylistic traits often assigned to the narrative genre of "epic." They employ a dazzling array of figurative language, such as Hailey's declaration, above: "I'm every pang. I am pain. / Every Upper East Side plaidskirted kid" (92). A pedantic reader might also ask whether anybody really is wearing feces around one wrist. It seems, then, as though these narrators may indulge in a certain amount of exuberant embellishment as they transform their experiences into language. At the end of each account, however, the discrepancies reach a kind of climax, as Sam and Hailey each witness the other's death. I would argue that Danielewski intends this confusion to draw the reader's attention to

[23] A full treatment of these traditions seems too bulky to be useful here; for further discussion of the cognitive perspective on the concept of realism in narrative see Fludernik (38; Chapter 4; 316). For further discussion of the blending-theory perspective on "the real," see Turner (74, 96), and especially F&T on the essential role of the "unreal" in conceptions of the "real" (178; Chapter 11). For versions of the "reality" at stake in calling the novel a "realist" genre, see the further discussion below.

those troubling chronomosaics.

As in *Pale Fire* and *Half Life*, *Only Revolutions* provides an equivocal array of prompts that allow the reader to rebuild the combined-story blend (the story-world) in more than one way, depending on which textual material the reader happens to take into account. The chronomosaics that run along *OR*'s margins contribute a date to each page: Sam's pages begin with 1863 and run to 1963; Hailey's begin in 1963 and run to 2063, their contents blank after the book's publication date (see H284). Beneath the dates appear lists of headline-like snippets that range from straightforward news items—"Mussolini attacks Greece" (S166) to coy quotations: "*—Ich bin ein Berliner*" (S340). An entry in 1940 recounts a glib bit of dialogue: "*—Did you do this? / —No you did*" (S167). Today's readers will have no trouble recognizing the events of World War II, and many will also recognize the key words of John F. Kennedy's Berlin address, but fewer will connect the last quotation with Picasso's purported words on *Guernica*.[24] Almost none will have the patience to read the chronomosaics word for word—they line the pages like the digital ticker-tape of headlines on today's TV news screens (or perhaps, given Sam's datelines, the crackle of a half-heard radio, or the multi-column headlines on a newspaper).

The precise origin of these "chronomosaics" remains unclear; a reader might postulate a shadowy covert "editor" figure, given the novel's subtitle, "The Democracy of Two, Set Out & Chronologically Arranged." It might also be possible to consider it the teen narrators' unconscious or semi-conscious awareness of historical events—the text seems ambiguous. Either way, the point here is that textual elements *within* the narratives constantly refer the reader

[24] I find Danielewski's choice of quotations interesting, since the first has frequently been misinterpreted as a gaffe (English speakers have taken "Berliner" to refer to a jelly donut, and it does—just not in Berlin), and the latter is an oft-repeated anecdote that may or may not be accurate. It therefore seems to me that the chronomosaics depict a twenty-first-century consciousness's awareness of history. On this, more below.

to the temporal frame of the events in the chronomosaics, as has already become visible in the above examples. In the restaurant excerpt, Sam's page bears the dateline "Nov 19 1945" and he sees Hailey receiving five- and ten-dollar bills—"Lincolns and Hamiltons" (S197)—whereas Hailey's page is "March 18 1987" and she sees Sam pocketing fifties and hundreds, "Jacksons and Grants" (H197). Their clothing is also period-appropriate, as Sam sees Hailey in "dome hat, bloomers and flats" (S197), while she sees him as "silk tie, suspenders and loafers" (H197). These seemingly "realistic" or "novelistic" details match the changes of inflation and fashion appropriate to the dates, and so the chronomosaics prompt for the second combined-story blend (see Figure 27, below).

Combined-Story Blend: Objective Eternity (S&H-Sequential)

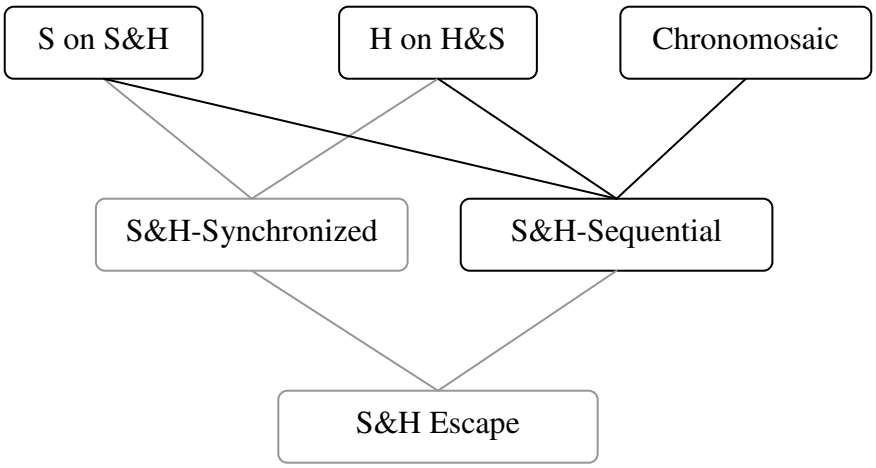

Figure 27. Blends considered in S&H Sequential

In describing the "emplotment" of events—their incorporation into narrative through the process of his "mimesis$_2$"— Ricoeur sees physical existence, the "world of action" as already

possessing an immanent narrativity.[25] Human beings can "emplot" this world linguistically because they know how to parse physical action. He therefore prefigures Fauconnier and Turner's insights into the physical, preverbal basis of cognitive concepts.[26] Ricoeur's time-concept relies implicitly, however, on a second-order epistemic priority, ordering both human interpretation and the spatiotemporal world interpreted.[27] To put this another way, if "time becomes human time" by becoming narrative, what was it before? This simplistic question evinces a desire to put a name to an externalized realm of temporality, a desire to which Ned Lukacher and Frank Kermode both respond with the word "Eternity."[28] The word marks an attempt to understand time not as open-ended duration, but rather as topology, as an external and independent whole.

For both Ricoeur and Kermode, this perspective remains the goal set by narrative itself as a process of mimesis, a "grasping together" of events in a causal system that explains them.[29] Neither Lukacher nor Ricoeur uses the term "objective" in relation to time, but both observe that this second kind of time supports theological discussions of the god-perspective of "eternity," and also pragmatic attempts to render time measurable in discrete units. What I call "objective" time is not, therefore, simply a theistic "eternity," or a mechanistic "clock time," but rather a way

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[25] This is where he and Fludernik part ways. She would ascribe to the world of action a "narratability," but would argue that "narrativity" is something bestowed by the receiver of a speech-act (see her discussion of mimesis "Level 1" and "Level 2," 43-50). Ricoeur's complex use of the term "mimesis" allows him to grant a narrative-like spatial and temporal coherence to the world of action itself, as structured by socio-linguistic codes. The legibility and recountability of the world of action constitutes his "mimesis1" (see 1: xi, 46, 53-4; 2: 101, 156).

[26] It might be fairer to say that Fauconnier and Turner rely upon a long tradition philosophical and linguistic thought. Examples include Wittgenstein's "picture-theory" of language in the *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, as well as Husserl's theory of "noesis" (see Ricoeur 1: 34, 238n.10), both of which provide alternate accounts to the Saussurean analysis of individual signs by emphasizing a larger scale of linguistic (and cognitive) form.

[27] Ricoeur hints at this opposition in his discussion of individual histories and the "*longue durée*" (1: 103).

[28] Both authors also use the Greek terms, opposing *chronos* with *kairos*, but Lukacher immediately replaces *kairos* with the Platonic *khôra* (4), a word he then modifies to describe philosophical attempts to grapple with the "aporetics of temporality" (Ricoeur 1: 71, 84).

[29] See also Ricoeur's treatment of Kermode (2: 26-7); similar accounts of narrative temporality include Frank's "pure time" (71), and Morson's work on "tempics."

of construing time spatially, which renders both possible.[30] For Ricoeur, narrative makes time "human" by presenting the slippage between subjective and objective time as "temporal experience."[31] For Lukacher, however, conceptions of objective time remain problematic as a desire for mastery by naming. To put his contention in blending-theory terms, it seems possible to read "eternity" as a blend that projects the structure of a narrativized past onto the future's empty void, and the subjective mastery of past events onto the entirety of past and future (see Turner 17, 48). Lukacher's skepticism leads him to follow Heidegger, who "de-realizes [time] as an existent being and reinvents it as a mere gap or notational spacing or interval" (Lukacher 21). Lukacher follows Derrida in redefining this gap as the "trace of an unthinkable exteriority that is marked on the inside of all our texts and all of our histories" (158). Whether understood as plenitude or as a trace of absence, however, the objective time-concept remains distinct from and opposed to the subjective time-concept of lived duration.

This externalized version of time is precisely what the chronomosaics contribute to *OR*. Some human agency conveys or provides their snippets of news to the reader, insofar as the datelines connect them to specifiable epochs, and insofar as they have been somehow chosen for inclusion. Yet they retain also the trace of the outside, the fullness of potential selection that remains ungraspable, and can only be invoked negatively. The chronomosaics literally draw a boundary-line down the page, between the narrated subjectivity of Sam and Hailey, in their text on the page's outer portion, and a nonnarrative external world, marked in a timeline down the

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[30] Ricoeur also uses the term "eternity" in order to work against any easy reduction of this kind of time to the sequentiality (and thus apparently durative nature) of clock time (2: 108, 130), and he characterizes this second dimension as *not* chronological (1: 66). Lukacher follows a longer historical trajectory, but outlines a similar distinction (137-8). For his part, Kermode sometimes calls this kind of time *kairos*, "the season, a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end" (47).

[31] Lukacher and Ricoeur share a healthy respect for Heidegger and Nietzsche, and Lukacher shares with Kermode a fascination with the eighteenth-century concept of the *aevum*, but Lukacher's focus on a recurring concept of cyclic "eternal return" steers him clear of narrative theory; thus he does not respond directly to Ricoeur or Kermode.

inside gutter.[32] Dates adorn each page of Sam and Hailey's accounts, but the dates are simply more boundaries. Most of the items under each date did not actually occur on that exact date, but rather occurred on some date between the one above and the one on the next page. For example, the reference to the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01 appear on a page where the dateline above reads "Aug 2 2001" (H227), and the following page's dateline reads "Jan 25 2002" (H228). Each event, too, is reduced to the absolute minimum of narrativity, at most a single predication of death: "Yokohama quake & wave, / 3,000 go" (S118). This is the time of the chronology, a non-narrative enumeration of dates and names.[33]

These dates place Sam and Hailey in different temporal contexts. The dates therefore highlight how each narrator chooses to narrate and dwell upon his or her own immediate experience, to the exclusion of his or her sociohistorical environs—but also how these environs cannot help but tint the account each narrator gives. As they try to narrate synchronized accounts that explain their shared experience, the language they have to use incorporates (literally embodies, gives legible form to) the context they try to leave behind.

To read the narratives as though the datelines apply directly to them seems so natural that the sheer strangeness of the process might easily go unnoticed, were it not for Danielewski's careful manipulation of the narrative material. In fact, the mere readerly act of "dating" the narrative elements is as much a story-level blend as was "S&H-Synchronized." To accommodate all three elements (two stories and a timeline) as inputs to a new blended space,

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[32] As I will discuss shortly, this line also divides the textual material and the knowledge and interpretive activity brought to this material by the reader. For more on this kind of line as *trait*, as arbitrary marker of inside and outside, see Derrida's *The Truth in Painting* (5-12).

[33] For more on the distinction between chronology (events or objects dated but not causally connected), achrony (timeless logical systems), and anachrony (the paradox between subjective and systemic time), see Ricoeur (1: 85) and Lukacher (5, 17, 21).

the generic space from S&H-Synchronized will need revision. As it stands my brief summary ("A speaker narrates Sam and Hailey's experiences") represents a mental space that includes roles for a narrator, for some experience being narrated, and for the resultant text; it also includes the relations that connect narrator to narrated and text (s/he stands between them), and that constitute the act of narration as an action (and not a happening). The chronomosaic has none of this specificity, for its tint of subjectivity suggests only a simple listing of items.[34] In a blend that combines all three of these inputs, the generic space must retreat to the shared sense of human selection, a sense that may be summarized as, "Someone recounts events in time."

Referential or allusive connections—what Turner calls "outer-space relationships"—extend from the narrative toward the chronomosaics in two different ways.[35] First, Sam and Hailey sprinkle throughout their texts details of costume or prop such as those mentioned in the previous section—a spatial and temporal connection that links discourse-level diction and story-level existents with the time-frame of the dateline.[36] They also employ various period-appropriate elements metaphorically, as when they describe the "Creep" who attempts to abduct them with the phrases, "Machinegun Nests and Trenches. / Social imperatives" (S69) and "Viet Cong and Carpet Bombs. / Conquest's necessary" (H69).[37] Indeed his weapons, a "GREEK NÓOSE" (S83, text style in original) and a cudgel or staff (see 276-7) provide cues for further

[34] The material in "Only Evolutions," a series of drafts the novel's first page, published with commentary in *Gulf Coast*, seems to indicate that the chronomosaic fragments were initially integrated into the text. Danielewski would seem to have intentionally revised his drafts in order to differentiate between the news-snippets and the narrative.
[35] I see these connections therefore not as suspended paradigmatic "structures" but rather as *vectors* that point like arrows in a specifiable direction. Much more deserves to be said on this subject, but it will have to wait for future treatment in depth. For further discussion of this kind of semiotic description, see Ricoeur's discussion of Greimas (2: 44-60), and Pier's summary (see "Semiotic").
[36] This example is much like Copland's "non-collaborative blend" (143).
[37] Further examples of this kind include sexual vocabulary (72); picnic foods (74); party accoutrements (91); racial, national, and sexual imprecations (95, 194, 252); kinds of restaurant (160); white-collar criminals (186); and exclamations (199). Even more probably await identification.

metaphorical interpretation. For instance, I see the spelling of "nóose" connecting the weapon with the *nóus* (nōos, nous, noûs, etc.), or Reason, of the pre-Socratic Greeks, later given more specific form as intellectual rationality by Plato and Aristotle.[38] As for the cudgel, Hailey sees it as a longer and more suggestive "Staff." It seems plausible under a feminist or psychoanalytic rubric to read the Creep's weapons and his depredations as an allusion to disastrous military consequences (World War I for Sam, the Vietnam War for Hailey) that stem from circumscribing intelligence (*nóus*) and phallic power (the cudgel or staff).[39]

In the second kind of relation, events from the dateline's temporal frame actually seem to cause events in the narrative, as when Sam and Hailey thank contemporary occurrences—a curfew (S176) and a close out (H176)—for the realignment of their work shifts. That is to say, the reader construes the narrators as designating a causal connection between events from the timeline's temporal domain and events in their plot. These intrusions are quite rare.

A different set of outer-space connections also draws chronology and narrative closer together from the other direction, suggesting that the chronomosaics are not without a kind of focalizing influence. The entries often use notable Sam-and-Hailey-isms, including irregularities of orthography such as "feer" (for "fear"), which appears in the narrative (67), but also in the chronomosaic snippet, "*—from feer everywhere*" (S167). Likewise, their term for the great

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[38] For an overview see Menn (14) and Evangeliou (Chapter 3). Eco also refers to the term in his discussion of Hermetic philosophy, as "the faculty for mystic intuition, for non-rational illumination, and for an instantaneous and non-discursive vision" (*Interpretation* 33).

[39] A.W.H. Adkins numbers "nōos" among the components that make up what he sees as the pluralized self of Homeric Greek culture (see Adkins 15-16, qtd. in Callinicos 11). Hailey calls the "nóose" a "Roman Cord," a possible reference to the various Catholic "Confraternities of the Cord." This distinction itself suggests a whole different realm of temporal differentiation, possibly associating Sam with classical Western philosophy, and Hailey with later medieval thought. The text also directly references non-Western cosmologies, and it would be worth considering how Sam and Hailey allude to these systems. Future studies might also usefully compare Danielewski's cyclic form with the fusions of opposites in the *Upanisads*, or with traditional African or Caribbean stories about death—traditions whose approach to time does not suit Lukacher's Western "time-fetish" concept.

river, "Our Mishishishi" (121), also appears in timeline items such as "Mishishishi & Natchez Match" (H44).[40] The chronomosaics share Sam and Hailey's fondness for ampersands, their use of "go" to mean "die," and—tellingly—the "o" and "0" (zero) characters colored green or gold.

The chronomosaics seem, therefore, less like a series of tic marks around the dial of a clock and more like a human phenomenal experience, a susurrus of barely-registered news-stories. Much as the narratives seem to record the present-time speech of someone undergoing present-time actions, the chronomosaics seem to be recording external, non-experienced events *insofar as* they register in the consciousness of someone like Sam or Hailey.[41] The textual details hint that a causal connection may link the stories with the chronomosaics, in the sense that the narrating intelligence by which Sam and Hailey emplot their experiences may also be the source of the lists as well. The chronomosaics mark—from the inside—the boundary between Sam and Hailey's narrative and the incipient narratability of their physical world.[42]

In the new combined-story blend's composition, then, the reader "dates" elements in Sam and Hailey's texts not by merely connecting the exact datelines or events to the narrative, but rather by placing narrative details among the rest of what the reader knows of events from the dateline's historical period. In this sense, the line that divides the chronomosaic from (and conjoins it to) the autodiegetic narrative also divides (and conjoins) the narrator's emplotment from (and to) the reader's recognition and contribution. In the "S&H-Sequential" blend, the reader has to infer that the narrators choose terms such as the above "carpet-bombs" from their

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[40] The spelling makes available an easy anagrammatic rearrangement, "free," that sets Sam and Hailey opposite the "feer" wrought by the Creep and his phallogocentric weapons. See also e.g. "Muncie feer" (S97), "Mishishishi's / 30 million acres" (S87).

[41] That "someone" might also be some conception of an ordering principle for the whole novel, an implied author or Danielewski himself. Such a conception would be no more and no less a product of the blending process than the connection I suggest, between the chronomosaics' focalizer and Sam and Hailey.

[42] This sense of a boundary between word and world is rather different from the one by which Lukács distinguishes between epic and novel (79).

available knowledge of the historical period cited by the dateline (see Figure 28). Details from their contexts seep into the narrators' accounts. Events in those narratives retain their temporal ordering and narration, but attain a new kind of duration, as well as new temporal relations to events they do not include. This process makes this new blend a single-scope blend,[43] instead of a mirror blend, for the reader draws roles and relationships equally from all three inputs, but must adapt the two stories' events to the temporal organizing frame of the chronomosaics. All of this complex cognitive activity produces the conclusion that the dates refer to the narrative—a reading act that seems far more natural and simple than it really is, particularly in this novel.

To complete the blend, the reader will have to construe the narrators as drawing upon not only immediate experiences, but also upon context. The conclusion may seem pedestrian, but its consequences within the "Sequential" blend are dramatic. By connecting each story with the external time of the chronomosaics, the reader subjects the "S&H-Synchronized" blend to a twinning and stretching effect. Even though Sam and Hailey each narrate what seem to be shared experiences, the "Sequential" blend construes these experiences as occurring in different historical contexts (albeit still within the same spatial topography),[44] and as lasting a total of two hundred years. The Synchronized blend produces a compact story-world, a single series of events lasting one year (four seasons), and ending in the paradox wherein each narrator witnesses the other's death. The Sequential blend answers the paradoxical ending by doubling the entire

[43] Again, see Appendix A and F&T (126-30) for the definition and discussion of single-scope blends.

[44] In both narratives Sam and Hailey trace a heart-shaped route that runs from Pennsylvania to New Orleans to Saint Louis (describing the triangular lower portion), and then up through Iowa and Minnesota and across the Great Lakes (creating the dip that separates the two lobes of the heart), before returning once more to Pennsylvania. This path deserves more attention than the present analysis has time to provide; Sam and Hailey mention different towns and landmarks on their routes, and I think it probable that their emphases are period-appropriate—perhaps differing by highway-routes.

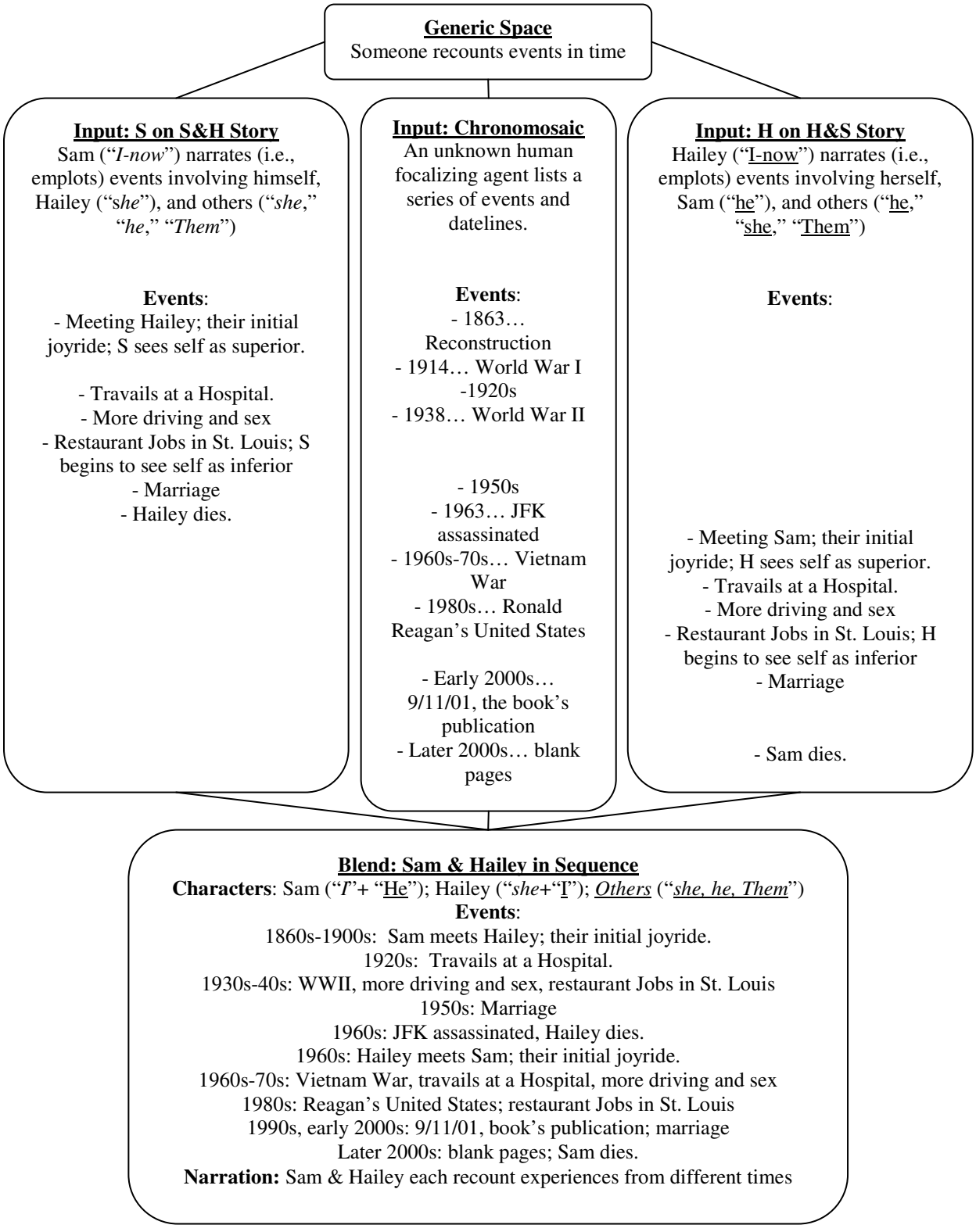

Figure 28. "Combined-story" blend for the S&H-Sequential story

series of events: we now have two road trips, one told by Sam, beginning with his exuberance and ending with Hailey's death, and the other beginning with Hailey's (apparent) revival and exuberance, and ending with Sam's death. The end of Sam's story implies the beginning of Hailey's story (in 1963), whose end (in 2063), in turn seems somehow to imply a return to the beginning of Sam's (in 1863). If the Synchronized blend makes a Möbius strip, a loop of story with a strange twist (the paradoxical deaths), then the Sequential blend slices it down the middle, producing interlinked, twinned stories.[45]

The Sequential blend is not without its own inconsistencies and paradoxes, however. The very "realistic" elements that connect the narrators to their historical contexts also do not seem to let them subsist simultaneously, or as real aging human beings. Their narratives "dated" by the chronomosaics, Sam and Hailey cruise through the decades, perpetually sixteen, each stretching the four seasons of an apparent year into a century. In the Synchronized blend the analogies and disanalogies between the two accounts interact productively, revealing differences in subjective experience that might be ascribable to differences of gender, class, or the psychological interaction of their relationship. The Sequential blend provokes a sharp contrast: its ontological doubling—two separate event-sequences—tears the couple apart, placing each narrator in the company of the other's doppelganger.

By pinning Sam and Hailey to the external temporal logic of the chronomosaics, this blend renders their actions legible in terms of their socio-historical context (most of which the reader's knowledge has to supply) but it also removes the sense of dialogue that comes with the

[45] Oddly enough, the idea of the twinned stories also reproduces the pseudo-Venn-diagram with which *Half Life*'s narrator depicts her own text (see *HL* 434), and the recurring "lemniscate" figure in *Pale Fire* (see "PF" 137). The lemniscate itself is also the infinity symbol, ∞, which also appears in *OR* in the odd volume numbers beneath each title on the title page: "Volume 0: 360: ∞."

shared story-world. If, for example, Sam's and Hailey's group-sex experiences occur forty-three years apart (*OR* 92), the reader can attribute their difference in reaction to events and circumstances that are actually different. Hailey's pained perspective no longer directly "corrects" Sam's pleasurable report, for he is traveling with another (strangely similar) Hailey, and she with another Sam. This weakens the reading of Sam's understanding of Hailey's felt experience. Sam's ability to read the experience as pleasurable is due in part to his context, the 1928 where public perspectives on sexuality were markedly different from those in Hailey's 1971; they are no longer together *as narrators*, even though they sojourn with an other.[46] The gendered difference in sexual experience remains the same; its intersubjective qualities (as something that Sam does *to the Hailey who also narrates*) disappear.

More troubling still, the act of narration changes at least as much as the series of story-world events. Read according to the Synchronized blend, the process of emplotment seems to involve some subjective embellishment, but what is the reader to make of the narration in the Sequential blend? Sam and Hailey become epoch-spanning figures here, either literally endowed with supernaturally long life, or operating figuratively, representing themselves as generation after generation of teenagers. Either way, the reader's blending process produces a pair of larger-than-life, non-realistic narrators. Ironically, the very period-placing details that might seem more appropriate to a "novelistic" text produce narrator-characters more appropriate to conceptions of an "epic" text. Likewise, the very characteristics that make the Synchronized

[46] This is an argument that deserves an article of its own. Sam's chronomosaic for the orgy page includes the glib "Oakley Harris, Sara Kellaway & acquittal," a reference to a 1928 criminal case in which Harris, a wealthy banker and gambler, told his common-law wife (Kellaway) that he would leave her for a younger woman. She shot him, but was acquitted because of his dying wish that she not be held accountable for his murder (see Gardner's rather lurid newspaper article, for example). The general frame of male privilege that surrounds Harris's behavior suits Sam's situation, and Kellaway's act and the legal outcome also parallel the way Hailey absents herself from the orgy. Sam notices, and leaves the group to return and apologize to her.

blend seem "novelistic," namely its portrayal of individuated, subjective experience, also sever Sam and Hailey from their contexts.[47] It is for this reason that I do not divide the different conceptions that the reader can produce from *OR*'s text into such genre-specific categories. The Sequential and Synchronized blends differ over how they organize their narratives' temporal dimension, and it is this difference in temporal *aspect* that generates this (so-called) novel's story-level contradictions.

The blending-model of narrative has now allowed the present analysis to sketch the difference between the familiar shared-world mirror blend in S&H-Synchronized, and the uncomfortable three-input single-scope blend in S&H-Sequential. Each of these two blending processes will be familiar to most readers from their prior habits of reading. Danielewski innovates by making each process lead to a different conception (megablend) of the story-world. The S&H-Sequential blend successfully integrates information from the chronomosaics to generate global insight into the temporality of *OR*, but it also generates the book's primary contradiction: Sam and Hailey live in story-worlds that are simultaneously "the same" and "different." Thus far, then, my analysis has produced a reading closely akin to the one I conducted with *Pale Fire*: Insofar as the reader tries to read the text as narrative, she generates multiple possible story-worlds that seem mutually exclusive. And yet, the blends themselves share not only long lists of characters and sequences of events, but also the road-trip story-form, a character-arc that aims toward maturity, and a tonal shift from comedy to tragedy.[48] They also share a narrating act that gives their story-world to the reader with a slant, be it the perspectival

[47] For more on this kind of distinction between epic and novel, see Kermode (39, 124), Lukács (34, 74-6), and Watt (27-30).

[48] Again, each of these categorizations deserves considerable analysis in its own right, but to keep the focus on the cognitive form of the story-blends, I must leave them for future research.

embellishments of the Synchronized blend, or the historical-contextual sprawl of the Sequential blend. It is upon these suggestive parallels that the final integrating second-order combined-story blend (see Figure 29) depends.

Second-Order Combined-Story Blend: The Escape (S&H Escape)

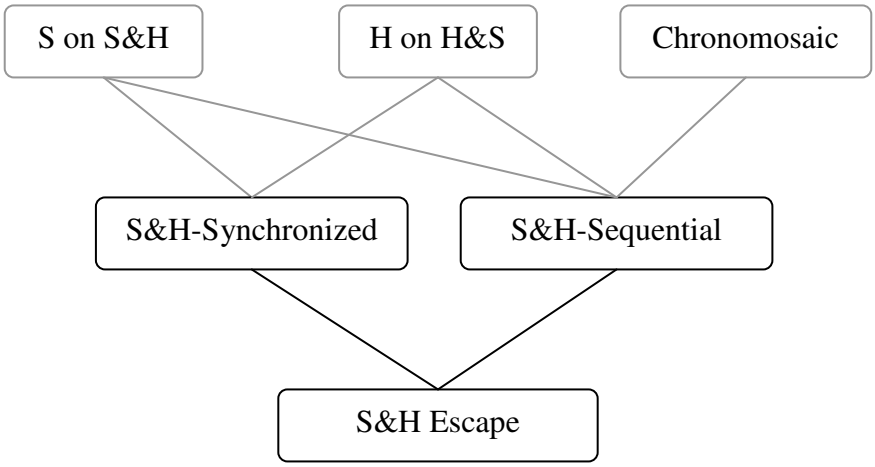

Figure 29. Blends considered in S&H Escape

By providing the reader such a paradoxical pair of possible stories, Danielewski would seem to have reiterated the "ironic" conclusion at which Lukacher arrives in his study of time, a conclusion that Ricoeur seems to share, albeit with more optimism. For Lukacher, conceptions of history as a "great circle" constitute time-fetishes, stories to refocus human attention away from the aporetic disjuncture between time as subjective duration, and time as system, as whole, or as Other.[49] Such stories mask the aporetic break, but also reiterate and call attention to it, much as the paired blends in *OR* offer insight at the price of deeper paradox. Lukacher espouses

[49] Lukacher's complete analysis sketches a precession of the time opposition's poles from *chronos* vs. *kairos* through duration vs. eternity (Chapter 2), becoming vs. being (Chapter 3), and finally subjectivity vs. externality or otherness (Chapters 5-6).

a poststructuralist perspective that sees "the 'incoercible différance' between two countertimes" (18). For Ricoeur, certain fictions do not merely attempt to depict human action in time, but actually try to convey a lived experience[50] of the disjuncture between subjective duration and eternity: "Only fiction, precisely, can explore and bring to language this divorce between worldviews and their irreconcilable perspectives on time" (107). His analyses of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Der Zauberberg*, in particular, contend that novels represent the way in which, as Turner puts it, "[w]e can oscillate back and forth between" time concepts (48). Ricoeur says that "emplotment," the ordering activity that produces fiction, does not resolve the temporal aporia, but rather constitutes a poetic reply to it, a way of "clarifying" (7), rather than neutralizing it.[51] He therefore shares with Lukacher the sense that the best that we can do is call attention to the disjuncture between the two temporalities. Even Lukacher admits a potential alternative, however, a dialectical advance[52] toward "the antinomical possibility of both at once" (100). I see Danielewski as working toward exactly this "both/and" situation.[53] The stakes here are high: taken as mutually exclusive, the two blends portray a disjunction between the narrators' attention to their lived duration and their presence in (their ability to narrate themselves into) their contexts. Taken as integrative, the text can be seen to present a continuity between, and indeed, a common human origin for this subjective interiority and objective exteriority.

In the preceding sections, I have emphasized the consequences of two kinds of blending

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[50] See also Fludernik's approach to narrative as "mediated experientiality," which she calls "the quasi-mimetic evocation of real-life experience" (12). She bases her account of mimesis partly on Ricoeur's.

[51] This also seems to be the meaning behind Kermode's use of the concept of *aevum*, the between-time of angels he traces back to Thomas Aquinas (see 70).

[52] He admires Hegel for asserting (against Kant) that the mind can cope with contradictions (97); blending theory shares Hegel's intuition about the mind's adaptability (see F&T 29), though not other aspects of his theories.

[53] It might be productive to compare Danielewski's "both/and" to radically different theories of time such as those espoused by Gilles Deleuze, or by Henri Bergson, or better still, to theories of time from non-Western cultures (see one note above), but such a comparison would require a considerably further departure from the theory of narrative that is the central focus of this dissertation, and would require too much explanatory apparatus to be feasible here.

activity on the temporal status of the story-world that the reader rebuilds from the text. This story-world constitutes the realm of action from which the reader assumes that the narrators draw, the epistemologically prior actions being "emplotted" by the narrators. The two configurations of this blended world seem incommensurable not because they are really ontologically distinct (they are, after all, heuristic readerly constructs), but because they contradict one another in the way they assign duration and synchronization to the existents and events—in short, because they contradict each other in temporal *aspect*.[54] The ontological differences (the doubling of characters and events in the Sequential blend) are no more and no less than this difference in aspect. Yet the story-world as a realm of action is not the only thing the reader creates by blending Sam and Hailey's stories. *Only Revolutions* prompts the reader to integrate the two combined-story blends not by virtue of their presumed referents, but by virtue of the narrating act that constitutes each blend's most basic event.

Narrative involves two distinct kinds of selection processes, and the present blending model orders them according to phenomenology, rather than epistemic priority. First, the reader selects sections of text, grouping them according to the cognitive frame for discourse and story. In so doing, however, the reader (re)creates the second selection process, by construing the narrator as selecting and narrating events and existents from a world of action. In both of the initial direct-story blends (S on S&H, H on H&S), the reader employs the same basic narrative frame, seeing each narrator as drawing upon some world of action, selecting elements for narration, and selecting (consciously or otherwise) the language to use for them.[55] The blended

[54] I draw here upon the linguistic term employed by Fleischman and Fludernik to designate concepts for temporal duration and co-incidence (Fleischman 5, 216-7, 306; Fludernik 66, 254).

[55] Heterodiegetic fiction masks this reconstructed act with a thoroughness proportionate to the narrator's "view" of the material, but autodiegetic fiction calls the reader's attention to it because of the narrating agent's dual status as

story-world that results from each of the combined-story blends (Sychronized and Sequential) retains this concept of a narrating act.

The reader can identify a crucial analogy and disanalogy between these two narrating acts. In the Synchronized blend, the reader creates a "self" for each narrator by understanding her/him as the "source of the discourse"—as a person narrating experiences and affective reactions ("arias," the *Kirkus* reviewer calls them) to those experiences. The narrators focus on immediate embodied experience, but each also employs a range of embellishments, from interpretive over- or understatements to more convoluted metaphors. Part of what is so funny about the novel's first half, and what is so tragic about the novel's second half, is the way these embellished selves mirror one another. The swagger of the early sections—"all around me / the World rebegins. For my saunter / and smile of course" (S34-5)—emphasizes their shared youth, for each sees the self as a gift to an undeserving world. The Synchronized blend is a process by which the reader builds their mutuality, seeing the story's (character / formal / seasonal / graphical) arc as a shared development and not simply one narrator's appropriation of her/his world. In prompting for this blend, the text prompts a readerly selection process that draws the two narrators together. By narrating their texts in such a way, Sam and Hailey desire that we see them sharing a world.

In the Sequential blend, the reader rebuilds a very similar narrating act. Again, each narrator creates a self by narrating immediate embodied experience, and each narrator embellishes and uses metaphors, and again, in terms of the story's arc, they produce "the same" story. Thus far the narrating act is analogous to that in the Synchronized blend. The disanalogy

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speaker and character. Communications and rhetorical models of narrative sometimes seem to want to collapse narrator, implied author, and author because of this seemingly shared role (see e.g. Genette, *NDR* 150; Fludernik 47; Walsh Chapter 4; Gibson 18); for further discussion of the term's problematic status, see Ricoeur (2: Chapter 3).

is that the embellishments and metaphors bring along with them elements that signify that the difference in perspective is a difference of historical context. The narrators may choose to focus on immediate embodied experience, but by integrating their accounts with the chronomosaics, the reader construes their selection process, their emplotment, as unable to avoid bringing contextual baggage along with it. This is not baggage that they want or even seem conscious of having adopted, and indeed metaphorical personifications such as "The Creep" often seem to be ways of avoiding historical circumstances in favor of a localized story about physical action. They would therefore seem to be *allegorizing* their experience, giving immediate physical form to events that are neither immediate nor, from the narrators' subjective perspective, ultimately physical. The Sequential blend is a process by which the reader separates the two narrators into distinct historical periods, seeing the story's arc as an analogous but not shared development. In prompting for this blend, the text prompts a readerly selection process that pulls the narrators apart temporally. Where the Synchronized blend relies upon the events that Sam and Hailey choose to include, the Sequential blend relies upon existents and turns of metaphor that they do not choose, but cannot avoid using.[56] By using the Sequential blend to carry out a separation against the narrators' apparent desire, the reader creates (in or for the narrators) the inverse of that desire, an aversion to context at the level of narration itself.

These blended story-worlds seem contradictory only insofar as the frame that governs the reading process is still that of narration from an epistemologically prior world of action—that is to say, insofar as the reader emphasizes the world-events being emplotted, rather than the acts of emplotment themselves. Recall, however, that *Half Life* executes a powerful change in register

[56] Here, again, *OR* parallels *Half Life*, in that all of the narrators in both books attempt to give an account of a self, but cannot entirely control the terms by which they have to narrate.

by prompting the reader to recognize autodiegetic narration as the byproduct of a different (non-narrated but narratable) action. In *Half Life*, the reader replaces the frame for "emplotment of experience" with that of anamnesis, a frame of trauma-and-recovery. The Synchronized and Sequential blends prompt in exactly the same way, cueing the reader to replace the frame for "emplotment of experience" with a different frame in virtue of a.) the disanalogy between desire and aversion, and b.) the massive analogies of story form, namely the road-novel's linear trajectory, here bent into a circle. The two combined-story blends prompt the reader to recognize the narrating act as an act that should by now be readily apparent: that of *escape*. This complex conceptual frame includes at least one agent capable of action in the world, and at least one of two possible sets of affectively-charged circumstances. One set of circumstances is marked by aversion, a circumstance to be "escaped-from." Another set of circumstances is marked by desire, a circumstance to be "escaped-to."[57] By recognizing this frame in action, the reader can integrate the two kinds of story-world in the Synchronized and Sequential blends, combining subjective and objective time into a kind of motion legible as subjective duration *and* objective whole. To see how, we will need to consider the form of the second-order combined-story blend, the one I call "S&H Escape."

In composing this blend, the reader will have to create a new generic space by recognizing the primary analogies between the blended spaces that result from the Synchronized and Sequential blends. This new generic space includes a concept for the act, "narration" as turning actions into text, an act carried out by specific agents. It also includes a concept for subjective embellishments, interventions by the agents in the transition between action and

[57] A useful typology of road-novels and road-movies might be constructed out of the interaction between these two moments of the "escape" concept. For further potential avenues of research, see the typological sketch provided by Eyerman and Löfgren's "Romancing the Road."

language (a transition that includes both emplotment and linguistic expression). The contents of this generic space might be summarized as "Sam and Hailey narrate semi-realist self-accounts from different perspectives." By the term "semi-realist," I indicate the sheer strangeness in both blended stories: the stretched hundred-year "year" in the Sequential blend, and the mutual witnessing of death in the Synchronized blend. The new generic space includes a vague concept of "that which is narrated," namely a pair of "self-accounts," but cannot be more specific, since the two blended spaces are disanalogous in regard to the temporality of the narrated events, and therefore their ontic status (as together, apart, and/or doubled). The generic space allows the reader to align the blended spaces from the Synchronized and Sequential blends, matching narrating subjects, named existents and events, and the story-arc.

To complete the blend, the reader integrates the twin acts of narration according to the frame already articulated within their (analogous) story-arcs, namely that of escape (See Figure 30). This means that Sam and Hailey not only tell a story *about* "escape," but also *perform* (by creating a semi-realist story) an escape attempt. The blend being composed here is truly a double-scope blend,[58] since the reader adapts framing material from both inputs to the "escape" frame, but thereby also changes that frame. Within Sam and Hailey's stories, and more generally within the road-novel genre, escape is a physical action (an event) reconstructed by the reader from the text.[59] The reader construes it as the object, the "what" (to use Chatman's term) of the narration. In the "Escape" blend, escape is a rhetorical strategy. Sam and Hailey, as narrators,

[58] See Appendix A, as well as Fauconnier and Turner (131-7) for the definition and discussion of double-scope blends.

[59] It might be an event of any duration, perhaps an individuated escape from an individuated locale, as in Sam and Hailey's escape from the hospital (118-9), or a generalized story of escape at what Barthes would call the actantial level (see "Structural Analysis"), as in their overall ongoing journey *qua* story in H on H&S or S on S&H.

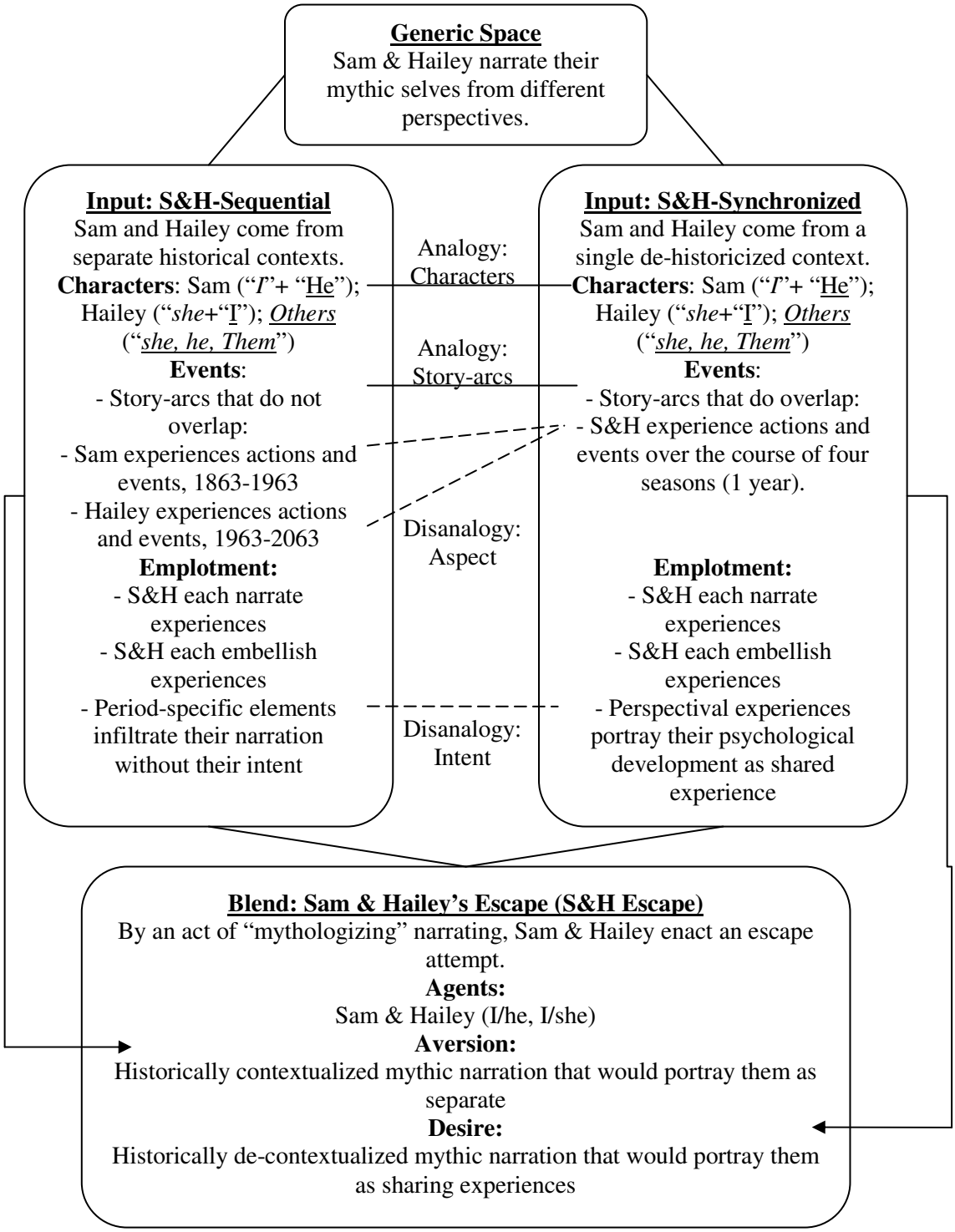

Figure 30. "Second-order combined-story" blend for the S&H Escape story

fill the escape-frame's roles for an acting agent. The story-configuration in the Sequential blend, which would separate them and bind them to history, fills the role for a situation affectively charged with aversion. The story-configuration in the Synchronized blend, which would portray them as participating in the same events, fills the role for a situation affectively charged with desire. Aversion and desire appear, for example, when they turn warfare of various sorts into a human-scale physical encounter with "The Creep," eschewing diffuse historical circumstances for embodied individuality: the Creep can be accosted and defeated, even if wars and oppression cannot. They "escape-from" contextualized, isolating narration, and "escape-to" decontextualized, dialogic narration.[60] This act of "escape" via narrative emplotment here is not narrated *qua* act (by contrast to the various physical escapes that Sam and Hailey do narrate), but by being recognized, becomes narratable for the reader.

Elaborating this blend, the reader learns to read Sam's and Hailey's texts as desperate attempts to narrate themselves out of their divisive historical contexts and into a common experience. They allegorize their journey, in the specific sense that each attempts to portray him/herself as participating in a process of growing-up shared with a human other, rather than set in an externalized (objective) timescape. Choosing the basic physical needs of sustenance (hunger, thirst, sexual desire, desire for companionship) over the details of a situated context, they "mythologize" themselves,[61] creating versions of "self" that are simultaneously more

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[60] I borrow the term from Bakhtin via Ricoeur, who discusses the technique's destabilizing effects (see Ricoeur 2: 96; see also Bakhtin 11). Bakhtin tends to emphasize more heavily the relationship between author and character, but he does emphasize the variety of "surfaces" or "languages" that such novels present (47, 49, 61). It would be interesting to see how his sense of "polyglossia" as an interaction among *cultural* languages would play out when applied to *OR*'s multi-ethnic allusions.

[61] I use the term to indicate an aspiration to suit self to world (and vice versa), an aspiration whose historical vicissitudes form the focus of Lukács's, Bakhtin's, and Watt's distinctions between the genres of epic and novel. Indeed, "myth" itself has its linguistic roots in the Greek muthos, the foundation for Ricoeur's theory of emplotment; for further discussion see Ricoeur's analysis of the concept's use in Aristotle (1: 31-49).

complex and more simplified than an account that hews more closely to realist narrative traditions. These selves are more complex in that they are layered in figurative language (the Creep as an embodied individual, for example), and in that the aggregate shared world has perspectival nuances, as when the reader reads-out a shared reality when they disagree. Nonetheless they are also more simplified, in that their very complexity serves decontextualized (and transhistorical)[62] human needs. In so narrating, Sam and Hailey themselves may remain unaware of the potential consequences of what they are doing, but by presenting the act in its fullest form—escape-from as well as escape-to—and rendering the desired and avoided situations as full story-worlds with distinct ontologies, the text allows the reader to see the teen lovers according to both temporal concepts at once.[63]

By reading the text according to the Escape blend, the reader can accept simultaneously the subjective experience of desire, achievement, and loss to which the narrators aspire in their self-mythologizing, and also the external context of their narration—thus revising her sense of the ethical question, "how can I read this?" One vital example must suffice here. On their way from work to their rendezvous at the center of the text, the narrators pass someone destroying, to their horror, a beehive, source of their life-giving honey. Hailey—dateline 1983—describes how "PEST CONTROL, working / about, stirs up some pesticide" (H175). Hailey and Sam recoil:

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[62] Ricoeur uses the terms "transhistorical" and "transcultural" to indicate the persistence of narrative form as a general means of understanding time and experience, while acknowledging its local cultural and historical permutations. For further discussion, see Ricoeur (1: 52, 2: 6, 47) and also David Herman's cognitive theory of narrative as a "tool for thinking" (303). These approaches revise assertions such as Alain Robbe-Grillet's, that "the novel is not a tool at all," and "is not conceived with a view to a task defined in advance" (160).

[63] Again, I can see an argument here for introducing an editor figure, as an entity involved in the chronomosaics' inclusion. I am not sure whether such a figure could legitimately remain clear and distinct (in cognitive or functional terms, if not in formal terms). If the editor adds the chronomosaics in order to clarify the stories' historical-contextual stakes, this figure may be useful. If, however, Sam and Hailey are somehow the source of the chronomosaics, then the distinction between the "editor" and the "implied author" or "Danielewski" becomes more difficult to maintain.

"Tripping US away, / spitting coughs, threats, & slaps. / But thank you, close out, at least our / shifts relink. Ending together. At last" (H176). They escape to their room, free and content. Sam's sequence runs nearly identically, but here the dateline is 1942, and the casual massacre gains new depths: "while PEST CONTROL, jerking / around, sprays Zyklon mist" (S175); here the exterminator remarks, "*Just slaughtering the swarm*" (S176, italics in original). Rather than merely creating a narrative quandary, this sequence prompts the reader to reconstruct the full gesture of Sam and Hailey's flight from context. They successfully portray themselves as reconnecting in love and harmony, and the subsequent passages, leading directly into the book's central pages, are among the most lyrical. Here, too, their discourse becomes identical, and the graphical contrivance of the colored "o" characters begins to mingle across the page space, here and there a gold "o" in Sam's, a green "o" in Hailey's—while the chronomosaics have no mingled "o" characters.[64] And yet, the preceding passage must tint the reader's understanding of their languorous interlude. The contextual world they fled still exists, and in that world terrible things are happening. The text uses the reader's cognitive work to make available two conclusions at once: Sam and Hailey are not blameworthy for the desire that animates their escape-to, but they are also implicated in the significance of their escape-from. That is to say, they are both innocent and responsible.[65]

One key ambiguity remains, and indeed, is a product of the "Escape" blend. By seeing the text as the product of a rhetorical escape attempt, the reader renders the narrators'

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[64] Here, too, Sam and Hailey become eerily conscious of their precarious textual existence, "something wide which feels close. / Open but feels closed. Lying weirdly / across US. Between US. Where we're / closest, where we touch, where we're one. / Somehow continuing on separately" (179, italics removed for clarity). This riddle's "something" may refer to the book itself, its pages now open to the center.

[65] This puts Danielewski's understanding of this kind of "mythologizing" process at odds with that of Roland Barthes, who uses the term to designate a mainly pernicious process of abstraction and de-realization that renders stories commodifiable. For further discussion of Barthes's approach and its relationship to acts of youth-revolt, see Yost (1318-9).

situatedness, their situation of narration, indeterminate in a carefully confined way. They must speak from some place or places in the U.S. Midwest, and they must speak from some time (or season) between 1863 and 2063, but it is very difficult to say more. There is but one suggestion as to precisely when they live and speak. The chronomosaic turns blank after the book's publication in 2005, and on that page (H284) it includes two items that do not seem to refer directly to a historical event. One says "Sam," and the lack of italics signifies that it is not a quotation. The other says "—*I love you*," with the dash and the italics that (throughout the novel) signify a quotation. Yet I hesitate to assert with certainty that this localizes their narrating situation in the novel's own historical moment, for it may be that these items are self-reflexive references to the book's publication. In any case, this uncertainty is of a piece with the Escape blend's other conclusions: their desire and activity both succeeds, in that it does render them larger-than-life mythic figures, and fails, in that the reader can still read the traces of their historical context.

For a reader who recognizes the symmetries between the Sequential and Synchronized blends clearly enough to integrate them, the Escape blend affords global insight into the text's troubling internal contradictions. Sam and Hailey can persist across two hundred years of U.S.-American history because their accounts of themselves (to borrow Butler's phrase once again) create them in allegorical terms. Their text is less a direct mimetic account of (epistemically prior) experience than a way of understanding the self as such. They engage in a storytelling practice closely akin to Bakhtin's "Rabelaisian Chronotope," a way of tale-telling that attempts "to measure everything on the scale of the human body" (Bakhtin 177), creating harmony between body and world, and restoring to the basic experiences of "food, drink, the sexual act"

(213) grander dimensions than the mere subjective confines that "exhaust all their significance within the boundaries of individual life" (215). It is in this half-metaphoric register, too, that each can witness the other's "death," a dual event that now sustains any number of readings as a parting of ways: It may be brought on by the passing of the season (winter begins on 338); by the close of a historical "great season" (Sam's account ends, and Hailey's begins at Kennedy's assassination in 1963); by the onset of maturity, a "childhood's end" consequence of their marriage and first complete sexual intercourse (see 313-4); because their honey runs out (319); or perhaps because the energy for "grasping together"[66] their story-world finally fails. It may be that when he "dies" for Hailey, Sam slips away into the 1960s, and when she "dies" for him, Hailey slips away into the 2060s, into the blank chronomosaics that mark only datelines. The Escape blend frees the reader from having to produce a clear mimetic account of these deaths as literal physical deaths, but tightly confines potential interpretations within the bounds of the story-arc (from being "allone" in one sense to being "allone" again in another sense) and its decontextualizing formation (at the hands of each narrating agent).

The Escape blend also permits a glimpse of a temporality that combines the subjective and objective concepts by portraying both as a product of the same process of human cognition: the construction of a self. Sam and Hailey's escape demonstrates how the account of a subjective life-world (what they escape-to) partakes implicitly of an intersubjective, social means of "seeing-as," of recognizing and narrating. Even as their accounts produce their experience as shared, they cannot avoid their contexts (what they escape-from). Simultaneously, their escape

[66] See Ricoeur, who follows Mink in seeing acts of emplotment as "grasping together" (41) events and existents by making causal connections, and also Lukács, who sets such causality against an equally powerful principle of contingency (76-8, 84-5). Prince, Ryan, and Kafalenos also see causality as central to narrativity, but like Ricoeur their concern is less with distinguishing genres of narrative than with defining a trans-genre sense of story.

also demonstrates how the conceptual account of an external objective reality only becomes accessible insofar as it can be seen as an aggregate of interactions between subjective accounts of experience. Specifically, the interference pattern between details in the text and the datelines in the chronomosaic requires not only the textual materials (the narrative accounts, the non-narrative chronology), but also the reader's knowledge and selection-activity, a subjective point of view distinct from Sam's and Hailey's. The reader has to see, actively, the contextual intrusions within the narratives *as* part of the historical period indicated in the chronomosaic, for only in this way do the narratives "date" themselves. Without this activity, without the interference the reader builds up out of the text, the external time-concept retreats into a negative hypothesis, something to be invoked rather than referred-to.[67] Sam and Hailey demonstrate that the two time-concepts rely upon the same cognitive process of self-construction, and that this process relies in turn upon a multi-subject interaction—what Diana Coole calls an "interworld."[68]

In some respects, this final blend will probably remain less clear in most readers' minds than those in the other texts considered here, for it leaves a lingering ambiguity similar to the question of Nora/Blanche's fate at the end of *Half Life*, but starker. Each of the other novels—including *Pale Fire*—presents the reader with a narrative whose situation of narration is more or less clear. Each presents its text as the plausible result of the story-world events, up to and including not only an act of "emplotment" (i.e., reorganizing events for the purpose of retelling

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[67] I take this to be what Lukács means when he declares that "the outside world cannot be represented," and that what we have instead is simply somebody's point of view—either the characters' or the author's (79). Danielewski seems determined to demonstrate that enough points of view (here, at least three) *can* produce an aggregate image of externality.

[68] Coole develops this concept in a complex analysis of theories of agency, drawing upon Habermas's "intersubjectivity" (126) and Husserl's "intersubjective life-world" (127), to derive a "transpersonal, intersubjective processes that instantiate an interworld" (128).

them) but also a literal act of writing. Kinbote describes his typewriter and his neighbors in *Pale Fire*; Nora/Blanche describe (and sometimes include) their scraps of paper; "Monk" (see Chapter Four, below) at least implies that he has reconsidered his actions, and presents them as a memoir in *Erasure*; and the narrators in *Califia* (see Chapter Five, below) describe transforming their notes and other texts into a digital archive. The tenuous identification between the novel in the reader's hands and a textual existent in the story-world strengthens the reader's sense of the narrator as human other, as some configuration of a "self" or "selves" undergoing subjective processes even as he/she/they write. *Only Revolutions* offers few such concessions. Sam's and Hailey's "text" seems to have more in common with an oral tradition—a song, rap, or epic, perhaps—and therefore may imply redoubled mediation, the shadowy unseen presence of a recording device or editor. I would argue that this qualification leaves their story-world status as narrators engaged in an "escape by narrating" unchanged, but the additional layer of mediation may make recognizing their self-narrating activity more difficult for some readers. The alternate possibility of a *fabricating* editor may persist as a limit-case, if nothing more (see also the discussion of an all-fabricating narrator in *Half Life*, above).

Conclusion

The blending-model of narrative reading allows the present analysis to venture beyond the negative conclusion that the novel's story-level temporality is only "untethered" or "unfixed."[69] The blending model describes, in the "Escape" blend, a story-level narrating act that integrates the subjective (Synchronized) and objective (Sequential) temporalities. Without a

[69] Several reviewers come to the "unfixed" conclusion: see Luce (para 7) and Poole (para 4).

clear theoretical model for conceptual integration, it would be extremely difficult to move past an "attitude of suspension" toward the two story-worlds, even though the novel seems to demand an assent to both. Here, the "both at once" position is less an immobilizing contradiction in terms than a way to begin to speak about how Sam and Hailey create their senses of self and world. This is not to say, however, that the "Escape" blend *resolves* the novel—it is not a structural form that resides, frozen, "in" the text. It is a process, a way of interpreting textual materials, a "mental space" that remains active along with all of the other blends (see, again, Figure 22). It is not a solution to a puzzle posed by the text, but rather a way of reading that the text encourages and rewards with greater insights into the characters, their contexts, and the rhetorical gesture of the book as a whole.

One of the most disconcerting effects of Danielewski's work is that its bizarre form makes many of the traditional literary readings I have mentioned (gendered perspectives, historical contextuality, psychologies of desire) difficult to advance with confidence, even while the profound symmetries and pointed historical references make the converse assertion—that Danielewski engages in a ludic deconstruction of narrative itself—equally untenable. The novel wants to be read as a dialectic leap forward, and by understanding its temporality according to the "Escape" blend, readers can make better sense of the intertextual and metatextual relationships it sustains.

Read according to the "Escape" blend, as a myth-making narrative act that eschews context for basic needs, the text permits the reader to see Sam and Hailey as simultaneously innocent and also responsible for their attitude toward—not their context or their world, for these ontological categories remain to some degree suspended—but for their attitude toward their own

self-formation. The central story-arc thus produces, like *Half Life*, a gradient of responsibility. For a teenager in the US in 1942, Zyklon may still remain a pesticide; the horror of the juxtaposition (for the reader) comes from that teenager's effort to confine a self-mythology to post-adolescent needs and desires. Yet by conferring narrating agency on two narrators, and by presenting their "escape-to" as a shared world of increasing mutual respect, the text avoids characterizing their myth as pure individualist escapism, a fantasy of mastery akin to what Leslie Fiedler describes in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (see Chapters 7, 10). The subtitle of *OR* is, after all, "The Democracy of Two." Ultimately the question of "how to read" reflects back upon the reader, conferring upon her a kind of responsibility *for* Sam and Hailey: to regard the two as wholly subject to and responsible for their historical contexts is not only to ask too much of their youthful awareness, but is also to literally tear the couple apart and render their burgeoning mutual respect irrelevant. Sam and Hailey lace their text with historically-legible details, but it is the reader who brings to the text any historical narrative that makes those details signify against the narrators' intent. The above passages must thus be read *both* with all the sympathy for the reunion of parted lovers *and* all the horror that comes with history's casual infiltration into that reunion.

In encouraging the reader to integrate the two possible temporalities, Danielewski seems to understand narrative as more a means for working toward a deeper understanding of temporality (Ricoeur's approach) than as a bandage or reassurance against a constitutive lack of knowledge (Lukacher's approach). Lukacher advises us to "Build your time-fetishes ironically" (xv), by which he means that the two time conceptions remain unreconcilable, but that we cannot do without myths that make them seem so. In Derridean fashion, he advocates that we speak of

time *sous rature*. By contrast, instead of creating and abandoning to the reader a pair of mutually exclusive story-formations, highlighting the bifurcation lurking within our common conception of time, *OR* demonstrates the common roots of both within a practice of narration, a "participatory belonging" (Ricoeur 1: 194) to a mythic road-narrative. The novel does not create an ironic myth of an unrecoverable past; it portrays two narrators engaged in the earnest creation of an allegorical present. The text's relationship to Ricoeur's theory of time is more complex, since Ricoeur's central thesis is that narrative tools are the best tools for making time itself readable: "speculation on time is an inconclusive rumination to which narrative activity alone can respond" (1: 6). By so doing, stories simply "clarify" rather than resolve the temporal aporia (1: 6), and this is the activity Ricoeur illustrates in his analysis of Woolf, Mann, and Proust.[70] It seems likely that *OR*'s resolution is of Ricoeur's poetic kind, but the text also seems to ask of its readers a more powerful integrating activity than Ricoeur finds in his examples.

Danielewski seems also to use this poetic exploration to address a distinct literary realm. *Only Revolutions* has an affinity with a genre that recurs in Fiedler's monograph: the American road-novel (or more recently, road-movie), a genre whose portrayal of escape has always been bedeviled with contradictions. This genre tradition covers too broad a spectrum of escape and self-definition for detailed discussion here: it includes Huck Finn's desire to "light out for the territories," as well as the more violent recent escape of Mickey and Mallory Knox in *Natural Born Killers*; the search for authentic experience in the Kerouac mode and its descendents; and the ambition toward socially forbidden modes of life in various inflections. Critical accounts of this road-narrative have defined its portrayal of escape in spatial terms, seeing its setting as both

[70] Ricoeur finds in modern novels a juxtaposition of temporal experiences: a network of experiences that makes time multiple in Woolf (2: 107); an "ironic detachment" that allows a heightened and useful "consciousness of discordance" in Mann (2: 130); and an "ambiguity, carefully nourished" in Proust (2: 147).

a dangerously exposed public space, and also a space that allows for an ecstatic (and private) experience of self-discovery.[71] In temporal terms the road-narrative sustains itself as a suspended trajectory between a departure and an arrival, and yet defines itself by its linearity and its precariousness—it may end in tragedy at any moment. This tradition by now knows the neither/nor conclusion well: endless wandering does not satisfy, but rather generates a longing for stability familiar to Steinbeck's Joads, Kerouac's Sal, and Scorsese's Alice.[72] And yet, stability does not satisfy, but rather generates a longing for movement familiar to the George Oppen of *Discrete Series*[73] and Penn's Bonnie and Clyde. Danielewski recognizes the cyclicity behind this genre's linearity, and bends his road narrative into a circular course in every sense of the term: spatially, temporally, psychologically, and narratively.

Instead of portraying a clearly situated world of physical action, however, *OR* presents a rhetorical gesture, a narrating act as an escape. By transforming Sam and Hailey from clearly individuated teenagers into self-making myth-spinners, the Escape blend invites the reader to see them as acting out an ongoing, recurrent allegorizing process. Their capitalized pronoun, "US" connects them with the United States, also written "US" (and not "U.S." with periods) in the chronomosaics, and they choose U.S. geography and U.S.-centered concerns for their shared

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[71] This critical commonplace has a very long history; for recent iterations see Smyth (115), Marinaccio (552), Spangler (312), Skinazi (96), and a survey from the European perspective in Eyerman and Löfgren (particularly 65). These scholars use as touchstones Primeau's *Romance of the Road*, Fiedler's *Love and the American Novel*, and Lackey's *RoadFrames*, as well as an increasing diversity of trans-cultural adaptations and appropriations.

[72] These and other canonical examples tend to be male creations, but recent approaches to women's road-novels closely parallel readings of their male counterparts, often consciously and with some concern over whether the genre can be appropriated for subversive purposes. For further discussion see the individual analyses of Ganser (163), Enevold (415), and Smyth (121), and also the recent monographs and collections on the subject: Deborah Paes de Barros's *Fast Cars and Bad Girls* and Heidi Slettedahl-MacPherson's *Women's Movement*.

[73] I draw this example from Marinaccio's article on Oppen's relationship to the road genre and to his modernist contemporaries.

sequence of events.[74] Their escape-by-narrative produces the same kind of "interworld" as that which allows the reader to read their accounts against a socio-historical background. It thus also produces what I would argue is Danielewski's central thematic vision: a practice of subjective myth-making that is in and of itself innocent and valid, and yet at an aggregate, emergent level, produces a cultural attitude that can be read as irresponsible or even harmful. It does not seem to me a stretch to name this emergent attitude "US-American exceptionalism." What makes Danielewski's text unique is that it uses narrative's temporal capabilities (instead of just the spatial perambulations) to illustrate this participatory process. In an impressive feat of textual orchestration, *OR* portrays a process of self-mythologization that proves to be legible as earnest allegory (rather than ironic self-conscious myth) precisely insofar as its story-world "megablend" construes it as an escape by storytelling, and calls its adequacy into question. Danielewski thereby both affirms and critiques the subjective storytelling practice of the road-genre tradition, and more generally the US-American practice of self-making, across a period of two centuries.

A full account of the sociopolitical ramifications of this loosely-sketched interpretation remains beyond the scope of the present dissertation, but the key point here is that *OR* does not engage simply in a parodic reenactment of the road-narrative's contradictions. Danielewski may write playfully, but his text goes beyond "play" in the sense of either pure experimentation or of the encouragement of "negative capability" (through plural story-worlds). His text encourages the reader to develop a "positive capability" to see as valid both the mythologizing activity involved in building a subjective interworld and the emergent characteristics of such a practice on a larger scale. Future studies of the novel's intertextual relationships, not to mention its

[74] I cannot help but think that Danielewski has heard Greg Graffin's ironic slogan for self-centered materialism: "The first word in USA is US!"

relationship with its own historical context, will need to take into account its integrated temporality, and the resultant portrayal of a myth-making gesture. *Only Revolutions* not only critiques subjective myth-making; it also critiques demands for historical awareness that assume that such myth-making can only ever re-enact an individualist desire for mastery.

This closing to the present chapter signals the course upon which the present dissertation will move forward. Having now demonstrated the kind of cognitive activity involved in recognizing new forms of subjectivity (in Chapter 2) and temporal experience (Chapter 3), I have laid the groundwork for a consideration of the narrating agency by which the reader construes narrators as shaping (emplotting) their discourses. This narrating agency has already appeared in *Pale Fire*, *Half Life*, and *Only Revolutions*, in the slippage between the story the reader reconstructs from the narrator's activity, and the story the narrator appears to intend—that is to say, in the story-world tensions induced by an unreliable narrator. It is to the narrator's simultaneous control and lack of control over his discourse (his reliability and unreliability) in Percival Everett's *Erasure* that this dissertation now turns.

IV. Possessed by an Invisible Man: Narrating Agency as Reliability in *Erasure*

Percival Everett's *Erasure* takes the form of Thelonious "Monk" Ellison's fictional memoir, and contains within its pages another "novel," a Richard Wright / Iceberg Slim / Sapphire pastiche the narrator/author first names *My Pafology*, but then retitles *Fuck*. Monk, an upper middle class academic who "[doesn't] believe in race" but happens to live in a culture that calls him "black," ostensibly writes the embedded text as a parody, but then signs it and sells it under the pen-name "Stagg R. Leigh." In a publishing environment in love with "gritty" narratives of "black" life, *Fuck* attains popular success as an authentic "tale from the ghetto," to Monk's horror—and financial benefit. As a narrator-character, providing an account of these experiences, Monk seems to expose the racial discourses imposed upon him, providing a *more* authentic account of how his society's social codes operate. He seems a narrator who might be called "reliable," because he possesses sufficient awareness and skill to render his world into words. At times, however, he seems to protest too much, displaying evidence that he is less concerned with racial discourse than he is with his own upper-middle-class status. This suggests that his narrative is less a product of his intent to set the record straight about his books, and more an identity claim that seems increasingly defensive—making him "unreliable" in his account of his own motivations. In this chapter I will argue that Everett parallels the novelists in the preceding chapters, providing a narrator whose account produces different conceptions of narrating agency. The result is two conflicting bodies of evidence concerning Monk's "reliability,"[11] one of which presents him as in control of his own discourse, and the other of

[1] Throughout this chapter, I will try to avoid arranging the various blends too rigidly along the "reliability" divide, because it is too broad. Monk is not intentionally devious, like Kinbote in *Pale Fire*, and I am also determined to

which presents him as *controlled by* the discourse he has to use. In other words, *Erasure* sharpens the effect generated by both of the preceding novels, portraying a narrator who knows his self-narration is not adequate to his lived experience, and thereby making the reader consider "how to read" his discourse. In the second half of the novel, a pattern of allusions to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* prompts the reader to combine the two versions of Monk's narrating agency, producing a conception of his efforts as simultaneously reliable and unreliable.[2] In so doing, *Erasure* asks the reader to regard claims of autobiographical authenticity with skepticism, especially with regard to "gritty" portrayals of racial difference, from classics such as *Native Son* to recent efforts such as *Push* (and its filmic adaptation as *Precious*, recipient of so many accolades) or the HBO drama *The Wire*. But it critiques with equal vigor approaches that minimize social difference and suppose a "post-racial society." Everett therefore seems to share with Paul Gilroy a social conception of belonging and identity that embraces self-identification through shared experience rather than "race," a position amenable to the narrative conception of self advanced by all of the novels considered here.[3]

Monk lives in California, "teaching a bunch of green California intellects about Russian formalism" and writing what he admits are "dense, obscure novels" (3). He looks askance at his society's obsession with race, denying both its phenomenal reality and its appropriateness as a

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avoid the conception of unreliability that Bell sketches, following Wayne Booth, wherein reliability is a matter of the narrator's adherence to "the implied author's norms" (*The Contemporary African American Novel* 8). Under the present blending model of narration, this conception begs the question, since "the implied author's norms" result from the blending process by which the reader creates the narrator.

[2] That is to say, reliable and unreliable along the same "axes of communication," to follow Phelan's terminology. Narrators are often reliable in perception, for example, but unreliable in interpretation or evaluation. Monk becomes reliable-and-unreliable on both of the latter "axes."

[3] Gilroy's *Against Race* advances a neo-humanist position against racializing discourse (41). For my purposes, it is important that he emphasizes hybrid processes of identification rather than fixed identities (25, 107, 123). His genealogical project sees racism as an inevitable byproduct of the consolidation of "biopower" within the nation-state—a discussion that falls well outside the scope of the present study.

subject for interest: "The hard, *gritty* truth of the matter is that I hardly ever think about race. Those times when I did think about it a lot I did so because of my guilt for not thinking about it. I don't believe in race" (2). In the course of the novel he undergoes an unhappy convergence of family catastrophes: a mother succumbing to Alzheimer's, a sister shot and killed for working in a family-planning clinic, and a brother who loses career and family when he admits his homosexuality. When a badly-written mainstream novel, Juanita Mae Jenkins's *We's Lives in Da Ghetto*, receives national adulation, he reacts in rage. Under a *nom de plume*, he creates his own parodic "novel" (by length, a novella), which he includes in *Erasure* in its entirety, sixty-eight pages of eye-dialect "ghetto" slang initially titled *My Pafology*, but later re-titled simply *Fuck*.[4] As a putatively "realistic" account by a putatively "real" ex-con, *Fuck* attains vast success and earns Monk fame and fortune—but only if he appears as his *nom de plume*, Stagg R. Leigh. He proceeds to impersonate Stagg for an adoring public, but in the process wreaks havoc with his sense of self and artistic integrity, reaching the brink of insanity before deciding to "out" himself. And yet, *Erasure* ends before the reader learns the public results of his decision.

At the time of this writing, *Erasure* has received more scholarly attention than *Half Life* or *Only Revolutions*, surely due in part to its controversial content. Critics find in it an energetic rebelliousness, and assert its determination to break with various novelistic conventions (see Eaton, Russett, Ramsey). Some see in its pages a revisionist approach to "the South" (Ramsey), to the African American novel tradition (Russett), and to notions of authenticity in literature as

[4] As Germana notes, the parody that fails by succeeding is a common trope, including in addition to *Invisible Man*, Spike Lee's *Bamboozled*, and Mel Brooks's *The Producers*, to name but a few (152). *Bamboozled*, in particular, seems worth comparing to *Erasure*. There is also an interesting parallel between what happens to Monk and the critical controversy over Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*. In response to Houston Baker's negative review, Reed asserted, as Martin puts it, that "Baker is in no way in touch with what 'real black people' are in touch with, because he is Western-academy trained and more interested in fitting in than in correcting inequities" (Martin 46). In both of these cases, the full parallel will have to be played out elsewhere.

such (Sánchez-Arce). All tend to provide a summary of the novel's plot similar to the one above, and in so doing, they convey the impression that Monk wrote *Fuck* as an intentional and parodic act of protest.[5] It seems a reasonable conclusion, and indeed he affirms this view to his agent as they prepare to send *Fuck* to publishers under Stagg R. Leigh's name: "If they can't see it's a parody, fuck them" (132). According to this account, publishing industry executives, less sensitive to history, culture, or indeed anything but market demographics, miss the obvious parody along with the sections of *Fuck* that have been more or less directly plagiarized from *Native Son*. Several scholars have therefore identified the web of intertextual allusions that connect *Fuck* with Wright's novel, as well as the novel *Push*, published seven years before *Erasure*, among similar examples.[6] Most also identify the panoply of allusions to *Invisible Man*, beginning with Monk Ellison's surname. According to the general consensus, then, *Erasure*'s governing mode is irony: Monk controls the parody's creation, but when he creates a nom de plume, and then, further, begins acting out Stagg's persona for an editor (136), a film producer (209), and an Oprah-esque talk-show host (236), he fulfills the culture industry's expectations for black maleness and duplicates the kind of character created by the despised Jenkins.[7] He controls the text but not its reception, and therefore the novel itself verifies the persistent binding power of his society's racializing discourse.[8]

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[5] Exceptions to this position are few, but Gysin does think that Monk's gesture is doomed from the start.

[6] In addition to Wright (Strecker, Gysin 67, Eaton 226, Russett 365) and Ramona "Sapphire" Lofton (Moynihan 116, Gysin 67, Russett 362), Bell's review mentions the work of Robert "Iceberg Slim" Beck and Donald Goines (475). Moynihan compares *Fuck* with James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (107), while Gysin explores allusions to John Edgar Wideman's Homewood Books (71n.9) and Morrison's similarly-titled *Jazz* and *Love* (74). Yost sees *Erasure* as a parody of a late-capitalist appropriation of the 1960s Black Arts movement (1315).

[7] Already it is worth comparing this point to criticism of *Invisible Man*, wherein inauthentic experience is seen as that which fulfills racist expectations (see Nadel 81).

[8] Recent theorists have used various metaphors to describe racializing discourse, but three are particularly relevant. Michael Germana construes discourse on race as a matter of exchange-value, linking linguistic theory with

The present chapter mostly agrees, but argues that the text of *Erasure* also simultaneously prompts for a different conclusion. In describing the moment in which he begins writing, Monk's memoir is more equivocal than the above plot-summary would have us believe. He describes coming to Washington DC to help his ailing mother deal with his sister Lisa's funeral. Alone in his mother's house, he

> sat and stared at Juanita Mae Jenkins' face on *Time* magazine. The pain started in my feet and coursed through my legs, up my spine and into my brain and I remembered passages of *Native Son* and *The Color Purple* and *Amos and Andy* and my hands began to shake, the world opening around me, tree roots trembling on the ground outside, people in the street shouting *dint*, *ax*, *fo*, *screet*, *fahvre!* and I was screaming inside, complaining that I didn't sound like that, that my mother didn't sound like that, that my father didn't sound like that and I imagined myself sitting on a park bench counting the knives in my switchblade collection and a man came up to me and he asked me what I was doing and my mouth opened and I couldn't help what came out, 'Why fo you be axin?' (62)

A paragraph break follows, and then: "I put a page in my father's old manual typewriter. I wrote this novel, a book on which I knew I could never put my name" (62). This sequence of events might be read as describing the anger and frustration Monk feels as he creates *Fuck*, but the description itself is curious: it seems strikingly specific in its imagery, but vague in its ascriptions of intent. "I couldn't help what came out," Monk writes, and then—*My Pafology*. The question

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economics, and equating racial essentialisms with the monetary "gold standard" (120). James W. Coleman cites a similar process in what he calls "Calibanic discourse," by which he means the essentializing discourse that black male authors resist, and whose currency they thereby perpetuate (see e.g. 1-4). Ana María Sánchez Arce also identifies racializing discourse in a literary tradition of "authenticism" (143). Everett himself has admitted that *Erasure* is "making fun of satire" or "satirizing satire" (Shavers 50), and Gysin reinterprets this gesture as a "satire on the fate of parody" (79), an approach that mirrors Germana's analysis of *Bamboozled* as "not a satire but an exploration of satire's limitations" (153).

here is one of narratorial intention. The passage suggests that what he writes (and *how* he writes) results from an intent that originates outside his "self"—that he was in some sense *possessed*.

This conclusion may seem improbable, but the passage quoted above has one dimension that connects the idea of "possession" directly to the novel's central concern with the narrating act. Several scholars have identified Monk's pseudonym, "Stagg R. Leigh," as the folk antihero "Stagger Lee," or Lee Shelton, a nightclub owner and pimp (1865-1912) who won lasting fame (and a place in music history) for murdering William "Billy" Lyons in 1895.[9] Fritz Gysin follows Cecil Brown's historical account of "Stagolee," describing the popular character as "a cultural and political hero, and above all a powerful archetype of the African American oral tradition" (Gysin 74). Gysin and Brown both connect him with "other trickster figures in black folklore" (Gysin 77). Gysin calls him an "avatar of vernacular power" (77) and identifies him directly with the Haitian *loa* (or *lwa*) Legba (76), a spiritual figure who embodies (among other things) principles of connection between this world and the afterlife (see also Deren 96-8). I find the direct identification unconvincing, and Gysin uses it primarily to characterize Stagolee as a "trickster." What Gysin does not mention is that Legba also has the power to enable the central spiritual experience in Haitian *voudoun*: possession by a loa.

As described by La Vinia Jennings and the folklorist Maya Deren, this ritual experience has several distinctive characteristics. It requires an open space, centered around a pole and accessed by a gate with a tree—for trees form the conduit between the spiritual world (beneath the earth and a layer of water)[10] and the world of the living (Deren 182, 98). Legba must be invoked through music, dance, and call-and-response, and must "open the gate" between worlds

[9] In addition to Gysin, see Bell (Review 475), Ramsey (131), and Yost (1329).
[10] See also Dayan (17). Gysin and Brown follow Gates's pioneering study of the African trickster figure Esu Elegbara in *The Signifying Monkey*.

(Deren 98, 186-7). Once this happens, a participant in the ceremony may be possessed, or "ridden" by a loa, an event signaled by a specific sensation or performance of one's feet sticking to the ground. The person's consciousness becomes temporarily subsumed by the loa's, and in this condition, the loa can hear with the person's ears, accepting entreaties and praise, and also speak with the person's voice, offering advice, encouragement, and sometimes (depending on the loa) uncomfortable truths.[11]

My point here is that Monk's is a detailed description of precisely this kind of ceremonial possession. He describes a "pain" that "started in my feet and coursed through my legs, up my spine and into my brain" (62), a route/root that coincides with Maya Deren's account of the experiences of possession.[12] He feels "world opening around me, tree roots trembling on the ground outside," and then "imagine[s himself]" as an other, and finds he cannot control his own speech. Encountering similar events in Toni Morrison's *oeuvre*, Jennings argues that Morrison seeks to portray an authentic sense of "Blackness," a powerful hybrid of African cosmology and shared collective experience in the (post)colonial New World (see Jennings 4-5, 184). From this perspective, if Monk undergoes a successful possession, he should be experiencing some form of "authentic" Blackness.

But this sense of "rooted" authenticity seems to be precisely what Monk rejects, and apart from his name, "Stagg" seems more an accommodation to the publishing industry's desires than a subversive figure. Why does Everett (as opposed to Monk, who seems unaware of it) choose such a ritual to introduce Monk's transformation into a racial stereotype? In this chapter I will

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[11] More properly, the loa rides the person's head, his or her center of consciousness. Each person identifies a specific loa as his or her *maît-têt*, or "master of the head" (see Deren 31-2, 249; Jennings 145, 153). For further description and discussion of the nature and purpose of ritual possession in African religions and their descendents, see also Mbiti (80).

[12] Compare Deren 248-9, 258-9; see also Jennings 131-3.

argue that the novel prompts the reader to reconstruct Monk's story—the story-world blend—in at least two contradictory ways: as creating a text that constructs him as reliable and conforms to his stated intentions, and as creating a text that constructs him as unreliable, revealing his continuing complicity with that which he means to denounce. These blends make available different interpretations of this "possession" event. An interpretation of Monk as the reliable voice of post-racialism, largely in control of his desires and intentions, produces the answer that Gysin embraces (77, 79): the central trope of *Erasure* is irony, of a particularly stark and searing variety. If Monk is authentically post-racial, then the possession experience portrays him as being dragged kicking and screaming back into stereotypical behavior. Whatever "spirit" possesses him must embody a conception of black maleness expected by white audiences, making Everett's invocation of Haitian practice a deliberate travesty. Read this way, *Erasure* indicts efforts (such as Morrison's, Jennings's, or Gates's) to represent authentic Blackness by appealing to an African cultural heritage. An interpretation of Monk as revealing his own unconscious complicity by overemphasizing his class-standing, by contrast, turns all his texts into mere identity-performances. Monk's memoir loses its veneer of authenticity, becoming a performance that tends in the U.S. to be racially coded as "white." The possession event here becomes more metaphoric, representing the way that the change in performance becomes legible as a change in identity: Monk moves from one discourse (middle class intelligentsia) to another (commercial vernacular). Because this approach denies Monk an authentic post-racial position, it may avoid an overly corrosive irony, but only at the price of seeing Monk's final escape attempt as doomed, thanks to his culture's inability to recognize a black middle-class intellectual. In terms of the novel's politics, the stakes of this interpretive difference are very high. How the

reader interprets Monk's reliability determines a key element of story (namely Monk as a character), and also *Erasure*'s thematic significance, its stance toward its various intertexts, and indeed, Everett's own perspective—for two of the stories inserted into Monk's memoir and attributed to him were in fact previously published as stories by Percival Everett.[13]

I argue that the entire novel simultaneously affirms both a strong conception of an African American literary tradition and a thorough disavowal of racializing discourse. Everett creates this distinctive position through his manipulation of the blending process by which the reader produces story from discourse, a process I will now discuss in detail before returning to the "possession" scene. *Erasure* encourages the reader to create simultaneously two distinct story-worlds, which I will call "M-Exposes" and "M-Exposed," and then to recognize their commonalities and combine them in a second-order combined-story blend I call "M-Initiated." Like *Half Life*, *Erasure* juxtaposes multiple narrative and non-narrative media, which operate at multiple narrative levels (see Figure 31), rather than juxtaposing multiple narrators (as do *Pale Fire* and *Only Revolutions*). Like Danielewski, however, Everett peppers every page with textual elements that can prompt for more than one kind of blend, and the twinned opposing blends, in particular, may begin to emerge for some readers on the novel's very first pages.[14] The opposing blends, M-Exposes and M-Exposed, also employ some of the cognitive schemas I

[13] See Everett, "F/V: Placing the experimental novel," included as Monk's contribution to the Nouveau Roman Society (see also Gysin 65, Eaton 221), and "Meiosis," included ambiguously, without a clear byline or explanation, in the book's third quarter. In addition to Gysin and Eaton, Yost notes the many temptations to collapse Monk into Everett (Yost 1325).

[14] For all this, Everett still resists categorizations of his work as "experimental" or "avant garde." In interviews he asserts that "Either all novels are experimental or none are" (Kincaid 377), and repeatedly disavows any claim to know the meaning of the term "experimental"—or indeed, "novel" (see also Shavers 48).

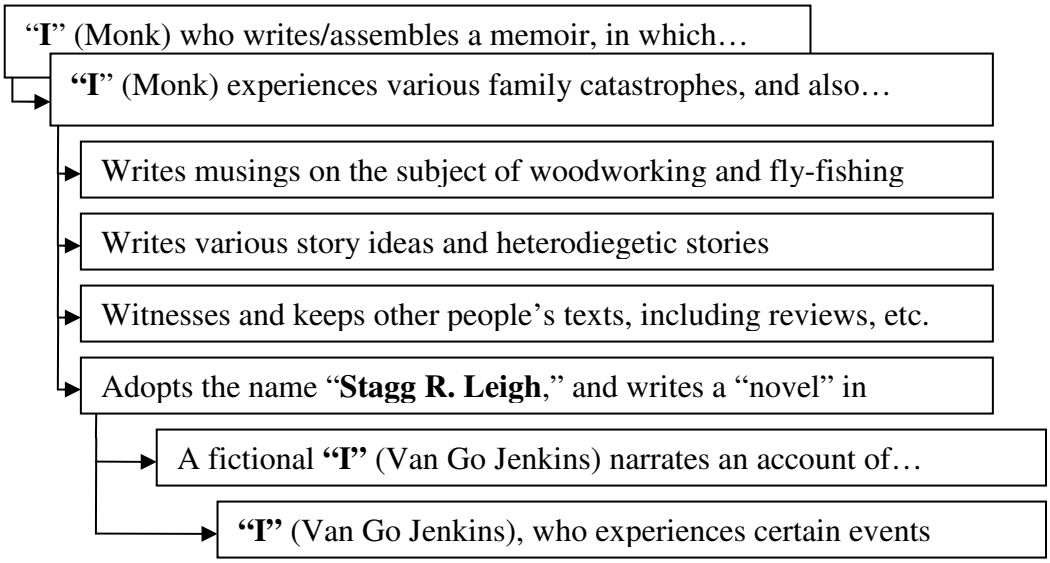

Figure 31. Narrative levels in *Erasure*.

have discussed in both *Half Life* and *Only Revolutions*, differing in their orchestration of cause and effect, and in their portrayal of Monk. These different story-blends, and the result of their combination in the second-order story-blend, profoundly alter how the possession-scene signifies, both in terms of Monk's reliability as a narrator, and also, therefore, in further interpretations of *Erasure* itself. This chapter will proceed in escalating blend-complexity, examining each story-world construction in turn before returning to a more complete interpretation of the possession-scene:

I. The twinned "direct-story" blends by which the reader produces story from Monk's discourse (M-Exposes and M-Exposed).

II. The elaboration of M-Exposes to include the novel's array of textual fragments, creating a "combined-story" blend.

III. The similar elaboration of M-Exposed, creating an alternate "combined-story" blend.

IV. The "second-order combined-story" blend by which the reader blends M-

> Exposes with M-Exposed, and with them, the two conceptions of narrating agency.

Direct-Story Blends: M on M / M-Exposes / M-Exposed

From the first page, *Erasure*'s language structure prompts the reader to identify a narrator, and to begin to fit pronouns, names, and verb-structures (tense, aspect, predication) into a narrative frame. This process should by now be quite familiar, so in this section I will focus primarily on the specific conclusions it affords in *Erasure*. The autodiegetic narration cues for a doubled conception of Monk, an "I-now" who narrates his preceding experiences as "I-then." As in the other works considered here, the reader has to rebuild Monk's experiences and his act of narration from the textual evidence, integrating linguistic material according to frames for narration and action to produce Monk's story-world. This story-world blend begins to bifurcate within the novel's earliest pages, as the text seems to suit both a version of Monk's narration as an authentic portrayal of the events he has experienced, and a version that sees it as repeating the very misunderstandings he chronicles. These different versions of the narrating act produce story-world configurations—story-blends—that differ over Monk's characterization, as well as the causal connections that allow the reader to see him as the source of the present text.

Features of diction and syntax immediately encourage the reader to identify Monk as a highly educated and intelligent upper-middle-class academic, a man who knows that his text will be read, and can guess how it will sound. Introducing his "memoir," Monk (I-now) admits:

> as I cannot know the time of my coming death, [. . .] I am afraid that others will see these

> pages. Since however I will be dead, it should not much matter to me who sees what or when. My name is Thelonious Ellison. And I am a writer of fiction. This pains me only at the thought of my story being found and read, as I have always been severely put off by a story which had as its main character a writer. So, I will claim to be something else, if not instead, then in addition, and that shall be a son, a brother, a fisherman, an art lover, a woodworker. If for no other reason, I choose this last callous-building occupation because of the shame it caused my mother, who for years called my pickup truck a station wagon. (1)

For the first paragraph Monk focuses almost entirely on the deictic present and his identity as narrator ("I-now"). Only in the final sentence do the verbs in the preterite ("caused," "called") and at least generic terms for persons ("my mother") begin to create a narrated situation. Monk's actual claims complicate both situations, for his narration simultaneously proposes and undermines potential reconstructions of his identity and purpose in narrating. On the one hand, his self-identifications encourage the reader to rebuild the set of story-world circumstances associated with his chosen vocations (writer, fisherman, art lover, woodworker) and affiliations (son, brother). In recognizing these relationships to as-yet un-narrated persons and objects, the reader rapidly and effortlessly places Monk within a series of conceptual frames, and connects these with the role for "narrator." At the same time, the phrases "This pains me," followed by "I have always been severely put off" and "So, I will claim," portray an act of narration that calls into question the very process of role-filling it creates. *Is* Monk in fact a woodworker? Or does he "choose this last callous-building occupation because" it portrays him the way he wants to be seen?

By proposing and simultaneously undermining a coherent story-world, the text places many facets of Monk's story-world *sous rature*, "under erasure."[15] On the one hand, the statements about being a woodworker, combined with the final sentence about his mother's reaction to that activity, suit a stable story-world in which Monk recounts—reliably—his habit of working with wood. On the other, insofar as the reader integrates these identity-claims with Monk's self-conscious statements, the connection between word and world shifts. His identity-claims become instrumental, rather than authentic; they become ways to produce or avoid conclusions, rather than accurate accounts of the story-world.[16]

In the oft-quoted subsequent paragraph, the text continues this pattern of narration-under-erasure, producing increasingly problematic interpretive dilemmas. Monk continues to make carefully-hedged identity claims, but now his concern is not with the legibility of his narration, but rather with that of his body. Because of his physical characteristics (carefully enumerated), "the society in which I live tells me I am black; that is my race" (1). Immediately he begins listing objections:

> Though I am fairly athletic, I am no good at basketball. [. . .] I graduated *summa cum laude* from Harvard, hating every minute of it. I am good at math. I cannot dance. I did not grow up in any inner city or the rural south. My family owned a bungalow near Annapolis. My grandfather was a doctor. My father was a doctor. My brother and sister were doctors. (2)

Again, what seem to be simple narrative statements produce a snarl of story-world conclusions.

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[15] The phrase originates with Heidegger, but the usage here follows Derrida's oft-referenced coinage from *Of Grammatology*.

[16] I want to avoid construing this as nothing more than a consequence of Monk's double-consciousness (see e.g. Bell, *Contemporary* 1-3). Du Bois's conception works here, but other texts can just as easily produce the impression of double-consciousness without placing the narrating act itself "under erasure" as *Erasure* does.

Monk seems anxious about being misread. The (presumably enlightened) reader recognizes Monk's resistance to the category "race," and also how his narration directly countermands the potential identity-frames in which his status as "black" might place him.[17] His self-predicated traits quickly slide from the physical to the socioeconomic, and here, again, the text cues causal connections. People identify Monk as "black," which causes him discomfort, it seems, *because* the identification brings with it assumptions about class.[18] This passage creates the same simultaneous stabilization/destabilization effect, for it suits equally a story-world where Monk makes a telling point against racializing discourse—or one where he simply attempts to escape a culturally-undesirable miscategorization.

These sequences of stabilization and destabilization raise the novel's crucial question, namely the precise extent of Monk's reliability. The disparate conclusions result from a crucial re-engineering of the story-world's pivotal event, namely the act of narration itself. On the one hand, the text prompts the reader to blend the pronouns and predications so as to reconstruct Monk as an individual, meticulously concerned with how he appears, and therefore to read the discourse as the result of his choices about emplotment, which in turn, are the result of his intentions. Within the story-world, his memoir begins with his intent to portray himself more accurately than "the society in which I live" has managed to see him. In so doing, however, he seems to be claiming a socioeconomic subject-position that constitutes the other side of the

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[17] For readers unaware of the status of racial stereotypes in Monk's milieu, the text provides several examples of Monk being misunderstood in the pages that follow. For the "unaware" or inexperienced reader, only a second reading will make these paragraphs resonate as I suggest here.

[18] Everett himself makes a very similar statement in response to an interviewer's question about race: "I know artists and I grew up with doctors. My grandfather, father and uncles were doctors. My sister is a doctor. [. . .] Occasionally someone will say, 'That's not the Black Experience' And I laugh and say, 'I'm black, and that's my experience.' [. . .] [People] want their black experience to be inner-city and rural south" (Shavers 49). Parallels like this one lead some critics to see Monk as little more than Everett's mouthpiece (see e.g. Bell, Review; *Contemporary*). I will try to remain agnostic with respect to Everett as empirical author, but I will also argue that *Erasure* makes such a close relationship between Monk and the *implied* Everett unlikely.

"race" coin, a level of education, professional achievement, and even race-blindness that in the U.S. tends to be culturally coded as "white."[19] His claim, "I don't believe in race," is also an attempt to avoid a specific discourse, and this avoidance reads at cross-purposes to the claim itself.[20] He tries to disavow racializing discourse, but his disavowal is itself legible as participation in that discourse. Read in this way, the story of his textual production begins with the cultural codes that create him as a subject and let him speak—it is these, rather than whatever intentions he might espouse, that cause the memoir to turn out as it does.

Such divergent prompts appear on every page, making two (or more) causal reconstructions—direct story blends—possible at any given point in the reading.[21] If the reader completes the story-world blend in accord with Monk's portrayal, his story is "authentic," and exposes his society's racializing propensities (I will call this blend "M-Exposes"). This insight reflects back on the direct-story blend's generic space, which might then be summarized as "Monk gives an account of his experiences." Insofar as the reader completes the story-world blend at variance with Monk's apparent intentions, however, Monk reveals that he lacks control over his claims and even his identity (I call this "M-Exposed"). Read this way, he is exposed by his text, as subject to socioeconomic codes that underlie racial judgments, making his story a re-

[19] See also Moynihan (106); Gikandi levels a similar objection against Gilroy's humanist perspective, but uses the term "Eurocentric" rather than "white" (see Gikandi 601).

[20] Monk outlines this insight clearly much later in the novel: "The fear of course is that in denying or refusing complicity in the marginalization of 'black' writers, I ended up on the very distant and very 'other' side of a line that is imaginary at best" (212). Everett expresses a similar sentiment in "Signing to the Blind": "Even when our [i.e., African Americans'] work seeks to be something else, it is a reaction to the position in which we and our works have been placed" (11).

[21] Some scholars of interpretation have referred to this difference in reconstruction metaphorically as an "anamorphosis" (see Lukacher 77, 97, 114) or "hologram" (see Jameson 23).

inscription of the very propensities he would ridicule[22]—and also rendering his intentions back-formations that aid his performance. With this insight in mind, the generic space might be summarized as "Monk performs a socioeconomic identity." To conceive of these different accounts of exposure as story-world blends is to recognize that the sense of causality at work within the story is a product of selective, proairetic combinations of textual materials, and not something that already exists in the text (see Figure 32).

This blended version also clarifies what would otherwise be a hall of mirrors. Non-blending descriptions easily produce a mise-en-abyme, where Monk exposes societal racism by narrating with irony; but his irony may fit nicely with his socioeconomic status, further exposing his participation-by-nonparticipation; but he may be aware of the problems with irony—and so on. What the twofold direct-story blend makes clear is that each attempt to see Monk narrating in some way authentically collapses into M-Exposes; whereas each attempt to outflank him by reading his activity as a repetition of cultural codes—to see him producing a cynical authenticity-effect—collapses into M-Exposed.[23] These blends allow the reader to produce different story-level conclusions from textual material as seemingly simple as "My father was a doctor." Integrated with the M-Exposes story, the sentence adds further detail to a story of the Ellison family as at variance with (and in Monk's case, offended by) popular portrayals of "blackness." Integrated with M-Exposed, however, the sentence adds further detail to a story of Monk as repeating the indicators of his class status, and thereby reinforcing the discourse of racial

[22] This is the interpretation that Bell advances when he sees Monk and Everett alike as determined "to erase or nullify his African American identity in his transgressive quest for transcultural freedom and wholeness as an artist" (*Contemporary* 324).

[23] It seems possible to describe the process involved in elaborating M-Exposed as what Lucien Tesnière calls "causative diathesis," the process by which action can be nested within larger patterns of action (see Cooren 11). M-Exposes reverses the process, re-aggregating such nesting as "understood by" and "intended by" Monk.

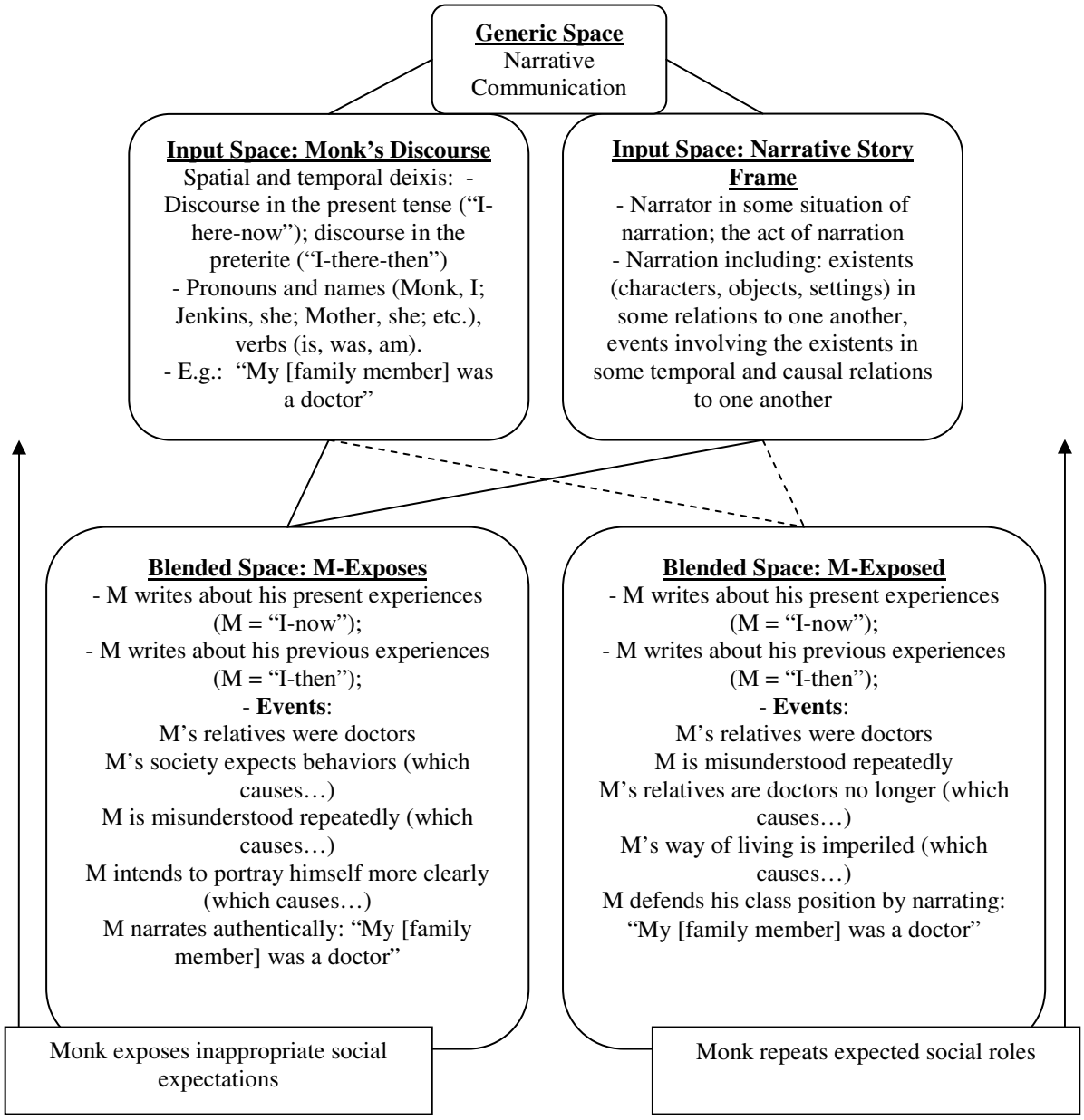

Figure 32. Alternate "direct-story" blends for Monk's story

difference that he means to undermine.[24] Already the story-structure hints at *Invisible Man*'s relevance, but other than Monk's surname, further allusions do not appear until much later in the novel.

As the reader moves on through the subsequent pages, the differences between M-Exposes and M-Exposed become increasingly important. Instead of an uninterrupted narrative, the text provides a multitude of narrative and non-narrative fragments. The former include analepses that detail events in the more distant past, as well as some imaginary forays into events that Monk does not witness, and embedded stories ostensibly created by Monk[25] (two large "stories," and of course the novella *Fuck*) and by Juanita Mae Jenkins (excerpts from her novel). The non-narrative elements include some works presented as Monk's (curriculum vitae, story ideas, and musings on fishing and woodworking) as well as works by others (book reviews, letters written by Monk's father Ben). These inclusions can exert very different influences on the story-world, depending on whether the reader integrates them with M-Exposes or M-Exposed, creating (at least) two possible combined-story blends.

Combined-Story Blend: M-Exposes

As may be apparent already, both basic versions of the direct-story blend include a great deal of story information that is not directly stated within the text. With each interpolated textual document, this interrelated collection of roles and relationships gets even more complex, but the

[24] Again, this is the version of *Erasure* that Bell advances: Monk "erases or nullifies the geographical and class foundations of the cultural identity of most African Americans by proudly declaring" his upper-class affiliations (*Contemporary* 325).
[25] I use the term "ostensibly" to re-emphasize the fact that Everett published two of them before publishing *Erasure*.

process by which readers incorporate these elements is similar to the one that produces a shared story-world from accounts by different narrators: it is a combined-story blend. The reader uses textual cues to compose a quick and simple single-scope blend, uniting pronouns with proper names to make characters, and these existents with verb forms to make events. Until the first page of *My Pafology / Fuck*, the text tends to encourage the reader to continue to elaborate the direct-story blend M-Exposes,[26] seeing the various embedded textual fragments as intentional examples that verify Monk's claims. Monk here appears reliable because the reader sees him as exercising a specific kind of narrating agency, which in turn will make the possession-scene—and indeed, *Erasure* itself—seem an exercise in satiric irony. I use the term "narrating agency" to distinguish the emplotting power that the reader attributes to a narrator from other conceptions denoted by "textual agency." These latter include several concepts well-removed from the story-world creation discussed here, such as the varying degrees of contribution to a text's final form by authors, collaborators, and editors (see Eggert 366); and the influence that a text or group of texts is able to exert upon social relations, which Juliette Merritt calls the "cultural authority" of an author (see Merritt 91).[27] Closer to my "narrating agency" is Cooren's sense of "textual agency" as the faculty of discourse-production (3), a concept I see as aligned more closely with my assertions that the text "prompts" the reader to act, than with the resultant reconstruction of Monk as acting-by-narrating.[28]

Not long after he arrives in Washington D.C. to give his paper for the Noveau Roman

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[26] Technically, M-Exposes becomes in this phase of its elaboration a combined-story blend, but for the sake of simplicity—and because the blend's generic space does not change—I continue to refer to the resultant story-world blend by the same name.

[27] Germana gives the term "agency" a similar meaning in his discussion of *Invisible Man* (135) and *Bamboozled* (155).

[28] However, Cooren primarily uses his combined pragmatic-semiotic approach to justify referring to texts and other objects as "agents" (12); here his "textual agency" parallels Eco's sense of "textual intention," or "*intentio operis*" (see *Interpretation* 64).

Society, Monk encounters a large bookstore display advertising Juanita Mae Jenkins's novel, *We's Lives in da Ghetto*. He recounts, "I picked up a copy of the book from the display and read the opening paragraph" (28). This sentence ends with a colon, and leads to a reproduction of that paragraph itself, in its entirety, its text distinguished from Monk's by italics and line breaks:

> My fahvre be gone since time I's borned and it be just me an' my momma an' my baby brover Juneboy. In da mornin' Juneboy never do brushes his teefus, so I gots to remind him. Because dat, Momma says I be the 'sponsible one and tells me that I gots to hold things together while she be at work clean dem white people's house. (29)

After a line break, Monk's narrative resumes: "I closed the book and thought I was going to throw up" (29). Underlying the obvious conclusion—that the text's eye-dialect and obvious success nauseates Monk—is a complicated combined-story blend. Monk's proximal narration provides little immediate explanation, and really needs none, given what the reader already knows about him. But "what the reader already knows" is precisely a direct-story blend.

Integrating the excerpt with M-Exposes can produce a twofold insight into the story-world. First, within the narrated situation (that of Monk as I-then), M-Exposes allots a character-role to Juanita Mae Jenkins as the "author of *We's Lives*," and an object-role for the book itself. The quotation tells the beginning of a story, and the story's form matches some aspects of Monk's own—particularly in that it is autodiegetic, and creates the same bifurcated deixis (I-now, I-then).[29] This narration is less self-reflexive than Monk's, a point that works with the eye-dialect to encourage readers to reconstruct the narrator, the "source of the discourse," as

[29] Apart from the obvious differences in orthography and diction, Jenkins's text does not clearly differentiate between the deictic instances, since most of the verbs appear in the infinitive. When other tenses appear, they distinguish temporal priority *within* the story-world (e.g. "since time I's *borned*"), and not between narration and narrated.

uneducated and unreflective. The reader connects this direct-story blend, which might be summarized as, "an uneducated 'ghetto-resident' gives an account of his or her experiences,"[30] to the role "Jenkins's text" in Monk's narration. Since the construct "never do brushes his teefus," for instance, is unlikely to represent any actual vernacular usage,[31] it prompts the reader to expect "the author of the quotation" to be a character who panders to racist expectations. Indeed, as Monk continues to relate the public reception of *We's Lives*, its complicity with what Bell calls "the commodification of blackness" (Bell, *Contemporary* 28) becomes only too clear: the book earns rave reviews for its "verisimilitude" (*E* 39), and Jenkins herself admits (to no public reproof) that she is not in fact from "the ghetto," and in fact only visited Harlem once (*E* 53). Here, then, is the vital activity conferred upon the reader. Monk's story is the one that creates a second frame for *We's Lives*, a *character*-role for "the source of 'the source of the discourse,'" namely Jenkins-as-author. By identifying the quoted text as what Jenkins wrote, the reader blends the whole narration in the excerpt with the role for "Jenkins's text" in M-Exposes (see Figure 33). This adds a layer of specificity to M-Exposes, showing precisely what kind of text Jenkins wrote, but also adds a story-world action to the excerpt. By integrating the quotation into Monk's story-world, the reader makes Jenkins responsible for the textual prompts that create an uneducated and stereotypical "ghetto" narrator. This integrating activity reinforces the story-

[30] Figure 33 will give this narrator the name "Sharonda," for the narrator here is "Sharonda F'rinda Johnson" (39), as the reader learns later. Upon the first encounter, however, the text offers no clues as to the narrator's name or gender.

[31] I base this assertion on the duplicated conjugation in "never do brushes" (as opposed to *don't never brush* or *don't brush* or *never brushes*) and duplicated pluralization in "teefus" (as opposed to *teef*, which might not be any less offensive anyway). As in Monk's linguistic performance in *My Pafology / Fuck*, Everett attempts to make Jenkins's eye dialect too outrageous to be taken seriously by readers outside the story-world.

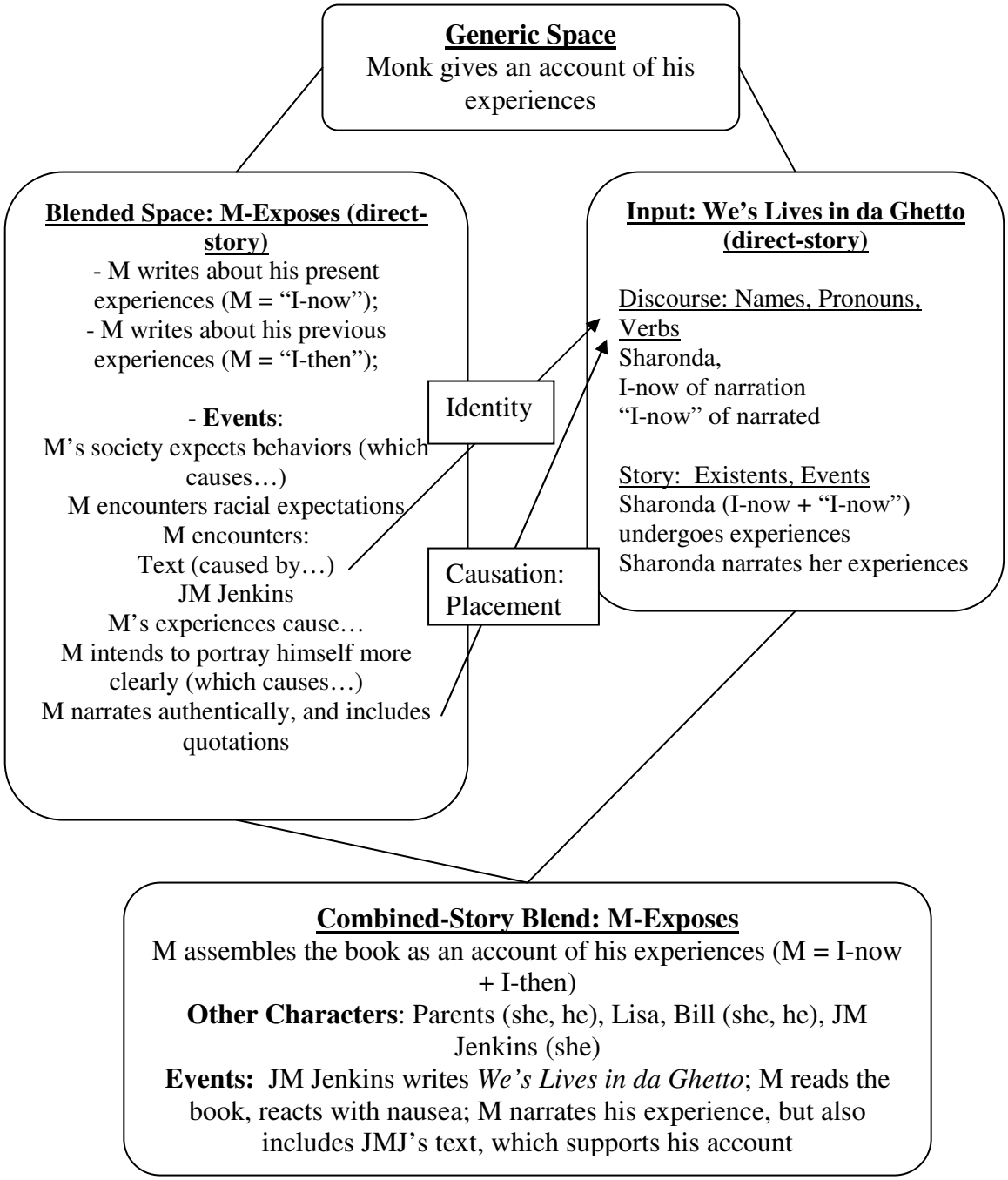

Figure 33. "Combined-story" blend for part of the M-Exposes story

world sense that Monk provides an accurate account.[32] Reading according to the M-Exposes blend, the reader reconstructs a causal chain that connects Monk's intent with his narration, such that he intends to expose, and then by including the Jenkins quotation does expose, racist expectations and actions within his story-world.[33]

In spite of this excerpt's apparent clarity, troubling details remain. Monk's re-description of her book as "a real slap in the face" and "like [. . .] turning the corner to find a display of watermelon-eating, banjo-playing darkie carvings and a pyramid of Mammy cookie jars" (29) revises the account he has just offered. Rather than encountering the novel while "strolling through an antique mall, feeling good, liking the sunny day," as he puts it (29), he was "in the middle of Borders thinking how much I hated the chain and chains like it" (28). What is more, he goes looking for his own work, and finds his books shelved in "African American Studies,"

> including my *Persians* of which the only thing ostensibly African American was my jacket photograph. I became quickly irate, my pulse speeding up, my brow furrowing. [. . .]. Someone looking for an obscure reworking of a Greek tragedy would not consider looking in that section any more than the gardening section. (28)

Immediately following this description, Monk discover's Jenkins's book. This sequence prompts for a causal reconstruction that relates Monk's horror not to the commercialization of Jenkins's brand of vernacular fiction, but to his own works being "blackened" with the same label. Such a causal sequence might still be recuperable under M-Exposes, were it not for the

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[32] This is the story-world that Yost, in particular, sees *Erasure* as creating: Monk's individuality constitutes "a human identity composed of a non-reducible array of significant experiences and influences" (1325). As I will argue shortly, the problem with this position is not reducibility, but the notion of Monk having *an* identity.

[33] Monk also perpetrates some inappropriate expectations: he at one point assumes (inaccurately) that a woman of lower economic standing will be unintelligent because undereducated (21), and he also recounts an encounter that reveals his expectations about a pair of gay men (47). The term "racist" is therefore something of an oversimplification. The phrase "inappropriately essentializing" might be more precise, given how the opposition between M-Exposes and M-Exposed plays out.

fact that the subsequent section offers the metaphorical "antique mall" as a summary of his experience. The sharp disanalogies between "feeling good, liking the sunny day" and being "irate" point back toward the logic of M-Exposed, in which Monk overplays his narrating hand and reveals commitments to which he is reluctant to admit.

Most of the textual interpolations before *My Pafology / Fuck* reinforce the M-Exposes blend. Reviews and editors' reactions to Monk's books specify and elaborate their authors' preferences for works akin to *We's Lives* (39). His paper presentation "F/V" confirms his adeptness at manipulating Barthes's poststructuralist criticism (14-16), his CV details how accomplished he is as a scholar and writer (56-61), and his panoply of story ideas and philosophical musings reveal the breadth of his education.[34] Digressions on fishing and woodworking also flesh out his involvement in more sensual, physical activities.[35] These interpolated fragments invite the reader to elaborate not just the story-world, but also Monk's sense of himself, his identity and personality as a human subject, as well as his adroit manipulation of textual material. Many excerpts still retain troubling details, of course, preparing the reader to return to them with the M-Exposed blend in mind. "F/V," for instance, presents Barthes as unintentionally carrying out narrative in a more conventional form than he

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[34] These include references to Joyce (185), Burroughs (12), Beckett (13), and a host of visual artists, from Van Gogh ("Van Go Jenkins"; *Starry Night* also appears on 255) to Pollock (202). He also refers to Fabricus Veiento (134), and quotes (in Latin), Tacitus (236), Ovid (245), and Isaac Newton (265), and perhaps a common misquote from Tertulian (136). I would expect he also recognizes Gimbel's allusion to Wyndham Lewis (19) and the quote from *Gravity's Rainbow* (36), but there is room for debate. He also includes dialogues (sometimes accurate) between historical figures, including Ernst Barlach and Paul Klee, Eckhart and Hitler (37-9); Klee and Kollwitz (49); Ernst Kirchner and Max Klinger (60); Rothko and Motherwell (155); Wilde and Joyce (186); Wittgenstein and Derrida (191-2); Griffith and Wright (193); Pollock and Moore (202); Rothko and Resnais (222); Rauschenberg and de Kooning (227); and Tarsky and Carnap (262). Monk calls these "notes for a novel" (39), but the explanation never reappears, and the dialogues sometimes seems to serve other purposes (particularly those between the novelists, the linguists, and D.W. Griffith and Richard Wright).

[35] The meditations on woodworking (2-3, 13, 44, 181) and fly-fishing (7, 43, 58, 138, 199) might be justifiably treated more as philosophical interludes *within* the narrative, even though they appear set off from it by the gray X marks that constitute section breaks.

intends, and Monk's CV also shows that he has been published by people whose writerly accomplishments he holds in low esteem: Davis Gimbel calls Monk a "mimetic hack," while Monk regards him as among a group of "talentless puds" (18), and yet Gimbel has published two of Monk's short stories in his journal *Frigid Noir* (see 17, 56-7). It is the interpolated novella, however, that begins to prompt more strongly for the other blend.

My Pafology / Fuck has the same basic autodiegetic narrative form as Monk's memoir and Jenkins's *We's Lives*, including a narrator-character, Van Go Jenkins. He narrates retrospectively, but far more linearly than Monk, and with orthography, syntax, and story material close enough to those of Juanita Mae Jenkins's novel (the surname is not a coincidence) to lead Bernard Bell to call *Fuck* "an outrageously scurrilous parody in eye dialects" (475). In this novella, the reader learns of Van Go's adventures as a "ghetto denizen" including unrepentant acts of deadbeat fatherhood (66); rape (70-71, 107); fantasies of matricide (65), endless procreation (82), and robbery (86); actual patricide (124; assuming that "Willie the Wonker"—the Roald Dahl reference makes *MP/F* all the more ridiculous—really is his father); and finally a pathetically incompetent showdown with the police (130-1). The text concludes with the apprehended and handcuffed Van Go mugging for the evening news: "Look at me. I on TV" (131). I call the direct-story blend that results from this text "MP/F," after the book's two titles, and I introduce it here because it cannot come to the reader without all the influences of Monk's prior experiences, including his encounter with *We's Lives*.

I lack the space to do justice to the MP/F blend here, and in any case adept analyses of the novella's existents and events, its structure, and its manifold allusive ingenuity have been

conducted elsewhere.[36] The present interest lies in how its textual details fit into Monk's account of his experiences, as articulated heretofore in M-Exposes. Following the pattern established in the Jenkins excerpt, the reader matches the "I-then" of Monk's memoir to a role I summarize above as "the source of 'the source of the discourse.'" This recognition creates a complex interplay between the discourse and story details of MP/F. Readers can split causation and responsibility here, attributing to Van Go (as narrator) responsibility for the actions he takes (as I-then) and the way he talks about them (as I-now), but also attributing a different kind of responsibility to Monk's choices as Van Go's creator. For example, when Van Go declares, "Look at me. I on TV," his discourse prompts for a story-world construction that makes elisions of linking verbs a part of his vernacular speech.[37] And yet, the contextual placement *also* prompts the reader to see such elisions as choices that Monk makes, from his own linguistic experience.

At this level, little distinguishes Monk's text from that of the Jenkins-excerpt above. As the reader reads out the direct-story blend MP/F, however, two key features distinguish these "vernacular" novels from one another. On the one hand, experienced readers can recognize textual elements as exaggerations or transplants from other texts, including *Push* and *Native Son*—from the latter of which characters and events are basically imported directly.[38] On the other hand, by incorporating MP/F within the combined-story blend M-Exposes, readers can pick

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[36] Gysin points out the names, characters, and events that closely parallel those in the novel *Push* (70), for instance, and the frankly plagiarized *Native Son* plot elements (67; see also Russett 365). Jenkins's "uplift" story, with its female protagonist, parallels that of *Push*, whereas *Fuck* follows *Native Son* more closely in presenting an aggressive but eventually defeated protagonist. This gendered difference seems to support Coleman's argument about "Calibanic discourse" (see e.g. 1-3).

[37] Although Gysin calls *Fuck*'s dialect "much less flawed" (72), Bell finds it no better than that of *We's Lives* (*Contemporary* 327). Other reviewers and scholars find *My Pafology* compelling (see Fife-Adams 163; Gysin 67; Sánchez-Arce 148; Russett 364;), largely for its humor.

[38] Monk basically imports Wright's work in the pool-hall conversations, Van Go's experiences working for a wealthy family named Dalton, and the fatalistic ending; see Gysin (70).

out such details more easily *because* they have in mind a conception of Monk's intent to expose racism. The first kind of feature relies for its full effect on the second; in another context, many of these elements might come across as simple plagiarism or failure of imagination. Here, the reader has to credit Monk with the surname Van Go shares with Juanita Mae, the names Van Go chooses for his children (Aspireene, Tylenola, Dexatrina, Rexall [66], and the imaginary Pastischa [82]),[39] the hilariously extended dialogue exchanges that consist only of "Fuck you" (see 75-6, 95), and so forth. These elements demand that the reader modify her or his conception of Monk's overall intent, specifying something like *satire* or *parody* as his newest means for exposing race-based essentialism.[40] This satiric intent is something that the reader creates by elaborating the M-Exposes blend, recognizing the analogies and disanalogies between MP/F and *We's Lives* (close parallels, minor differences), as well as between MP/F and Monk's narrative (minor parallels, major differences). Within the M-Exposes blend, Monk must mean to critique the entire contemporary vernacular genre that commercializes the style and story content of Black Arts Movement texts.[41]

Of course, as soon as he signs the work with the name "Stagg R. Leigh," readers may begin to reconstruct a similar but distinct intent. By the time Monk tells his agent to send it out "straight," and remarks that, "If they can't tell it's a parody, fuck them," the reader will have

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[39] This latter appears within an entire alphabet of names that Van Go imagines bestowing upon his progeny. They include "Oprah" as well as "Fantasy" and "Mystery," and these latter two are also the names of children in Monk's story-world (see 26).

[40] I do not want to enter too deeply into the satire/parody distinction and debate. I use "satire" here to signify Monk's intention to critique story-world actions, and not just other texts. Gysin calls *Fuck* a parody, but calls Monk's later performances as Stagg "satire" (73); others simply employ "parody" without comment (see Bell 475, Fife-Adams 163, Yost 1325, Sánchez-Arce 144, Eaton 226, Russett 364). It might also be useful to see *Fuck* according to Bakhtin's version of a parody: "In modern times the functions of parody are narrow and unproductive" because parody attacks sacred words, and "in modern times" there are precious few of them (71).

[41] For more on the analogies and disanalogies between the Black Arts Movement and the more recent public fascination with novels such as *Push*, see Yost (1315-20) and Gysin (72).

concluded that he means to fool at least some of the book's readers, shifting the cognitive frame from "satire" or "parody" to "hoax."[42] This is a different frame, and changes the overall project of *My Pafology*, as well as how it integrates with M-Exposes. The "hoax" frame is slippery, in that not all hoaxes need be exposed. For all the reader knows, *We's Lives* could also be a hoax, so "successful" that it earned its perpetrator three million dollars and an appearance on "Kenya Dunston's" show. Monk wants to carry out a hoax that incorporates both of the frames for parody and pastiche,[43] convincing some people *but not others* that it is an "authentic" novel. This kind of hoax functions, then, as a litmus test, meant to demonstrate the culture industry's[44] craven interest in what Sánchez-Arce calls an authenticity-effect, a simulacrum of "life in black America" (see 152).

By recognizing the "hoax" intent, the reader achieves a specific insight into Monk's *narrating* activity. Monk (as I-then) meant his hoax to carry out an exposure, but of course it failed by succeeding too well. Reading the text according to M-Exposes, then, the reader can deduce another kind of exposure carried out by Monk's narration (as I-now). He offers his memoir as a way to set the record straight, by prompting his readers to carry out *precisely* the M-Exposes blend, collecting the elements of MP/F that correspond to elements in his experience, and integrating the character "Monk" (including iterations of the name "Monk," the pronoun "I," and so forth) with the roles for "author of F/V," "author of the memoir," and "author of *Fuck*."

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[42] Unlike other critics, Ramsey also invokes the term "hoax" instead of parody or satire (131); Moynihan connects the gesture to James Weldon Johnson's literary hoax of 1912, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (107).
[43] I draw the distinction from Jameson, who also comments on the thin line between the two (17).
[44] I use the term here as a short-hand for the ensemble of editors, film producers, talk-show personalities, and Book Award panelists whom Monk fools, but the potential allusion to Adorno might prove enlightening. For recent pointed critiques of the concept of "a" culture industry, see Polan and Hullot-Kentor.

By showing the reader all of the texts, Monk tries to make his hoax-as-exposure succeed.[45]

The account of Monk's intentions afforded by M-Exposes makes available an interpretive reading of the "possession" experience with which the present chapter began. Monk describes feeling overcome by *something*, and then sitting down and hammering out the text he calls *My Pafology*, and recounts that experience in terms that echo the Haitian ritual of possession. Given that Monk intended to expose his society's ongoing racism, but also that his hoax failed, the possession-experience signifies that Monk is possessed by "Stagg," the popular (white, racist) conception of "the author of *My Pafology/Fuck*." Indeed, "possession"-oriented passages recur as he impersonates Stagg for his benefactors. Monk begins recounting his experiences "passing" as Stagg in the third person, and eventually in the present tense, making the Stagg-persona ever more distinct.[46] As commercialized, pop-culture racialized pseudo-loa, Stagg becomes a travesty, his invocation according to the vestiges of African spiritual experience an exercise in withering irony. In this interpretation *Erasure* is a stark judgment not only upon contemporary novels such as *Push*, or *Pimp*, or at cinematic texts that attempt to portray the "urban jungle," such as HBO's *The Wire*, but also at expressions of "Black" experience[47] such as Morrison's, as well any "afrocentric" exegetic apparatus. I believe that Everett is aware that he risks an ominously over-broad accusation, and carefully orchestrates *Erasure*'s textual elements to counterbalance it, leading the reader back to the alternate direct-story blend, M-Exposed.

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[45] This kind of exposure has been seen as necessary to the novel of racial "passing," clarifying the spuriousness of racial categories; see Germana's discussion of Johnson (96-7), Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun* (110), and Nella Larsen's *Passing* (111). Moynihan analyzes *Fuck* as an instance of "passing for black(er)," and sets it in a distinctive position within the discourse of racial passing.

[46] His telephone interview with the editor is still in the first-person preterite (see 156-7), but when he meets the film producer, he switches to the third person (216). In the Dunston interview, he shifts to the present-tense third-person, reverting to the first-person preterite whenever he breaks character to talk to Yul, his agent—often to comedic effect.

[47] Both Jennings and Morrison adopt the majuscule to distinguish a self-identification according to shared ancestry and experience from an imposed identification on account of physical appearance. It is a razor-thin distinction that, I will argue, *Erasure* confirms.

Monk's intent (as I-then) fails because his parody becomes pastiche, a repetitive performance. As Monk remarks late in the novel, "I had managed to take myself, the writer, reconfigure myself, then disintegrate myself, leaving two bodies of work, two bodies, no boundaries yet walls everywhere" (258). By composing his memoir (as I-now), he invites the reader to smash the textual bodies back together. But the earnestness—the reliability—of this invitation depends upon the reader's willingness to grant that a coherent, privileged subjectivity stands behind the identities he performs, and his behavior (both as I-then and as I-now) after writing *My Pafology / Fuck* calls into question precisely this coherence.

Combined-Story Blend: M-Exposed

There are, as suggested above, numerous places where the elaboration of M-Exposed might resume, but I would say that after the text of *My Pafology / Fuck*, it becomes more or less unavoidable. Throughout the first part of the memoir, Monk consistently tries to distinguish himself (as I-then) from any "author of" frame that might connect him to black vernacular fiction (particularly the commercialized variety), an effort that culminates in sending out *My Pafology* under Stagg's name. By offering his memoir as evidence that *My Pafology* really is a parody in spite of its reception, Monk may be repeating the same act of rejection, simply asserting that he is *not like Juanita Mae Jenkins*. If Monk's emplotment is really just an identity performance, as M-Exposed suggests, then the reader should be able to find textual material that works contrary to his intentions to "set the record straight," as I put it above. The portion of his memoir that follows *My Pafology* provides exactly such material, allowing the reader to further elaborate the M-Exposed blend by a.) creating cause-effect connections between Monk's "I-now" identity

performance and past events that constitute his subjectivity and determine how his performances signify; and b.) creating analogies between Monk's narrating (I-now) activity and occasions in his narrated (I-then) activity when he acted in ways he did not understand, and only created his own intent later, as a back-formation. The reader can thus elaborate the blend by c.) understanding the events in his narrative (including his act of narration) as consequences of his unstable identity, rather than consequences of intentional action. This blend alters the potential interpretations of the possession-scene, making it a metaphoric illustration of a change in identity performance, and thus profoundly restricting the reader's sense of Monk's narrating agency.

The text rewards the search for story-world situations that can fill the causal roles for Monk's narration, providing a growing degree of detail about how his relationship with his father shapes his actions. Near the novel's beginning Monk notes that his father, Ben, singled him out from two other siblings as "special"—and eventually committed suicide after several heart attacks (see 4, 10). After he has written *My Pafology* and suffered troubling experiences while performing as "Stagg," Monk recounts how Ben addressed the three children: "Lisa, you and Bill will be doctors. But Monk will be an artist. He's not like us" (143). These statements recast Monk's profession—his pointed decision to call himself a "writer of fiction" rather than mention his employment as a professor, for example—as *Ben's* decision, reordering the causal sequence that results in Monk's discourse. Indeed, Monk admits quite early on that his writing itself has Ben's academic standards and his playful, confrontational tone,[48] and, describing his father's favoritism and high standards late in the novel, he admits that "I [. . .] saw myself as being saddled with a kind of illness, albeit his" (186). In initially defending himself against allegations

[48] Monk writes: "For my father, the road had to wind uphill both ways and be as difficult as possible. Sadly, this was the sensibility he instilled in me when I set myself to the task of writing fiction. It wasn't until I brought him a story that was purposely confusing and obfuscating that he seemed at all impressed and pleased" (32).

that he is not "*black* enough," Monk hews to individualist conceptions of artistry, claiming the space to choose his projects according to his preference.[49] After he writes *My Pafology*, however, the text begins to suggest that his individuality—his way of adopting identities—is a product of the relationships he sustains, and the circumstances into which he was born.

Reading the memoir according to the causal logic of M-Exposed reintegrates the interpolated texts. Addressing Monk's pre-*Fuck* writing, one editor observes, "It's too difficult for the market," and adds, "But more, who is he writing to?" (42). The reader can now integrate the editor's judgment with M-Exposed: Monk writes to his father. Indeed, the content of his writing has changed little, if the form has become ever more opaque. "F/V," the "novel excerpt" included in the text when he gives it as a paper for the Noveau Roman Society, serves as an objective example of Monk's writing under M-Exposes, but in M-Exposed it fills a different role. The paper is a parody of Roland Barthes's treatment of Balzac's *Sarrasine* in *S/Z*, and concludes with an assertion that although Barthes tries to do away with conventional conceptions of narrative form, his own analysis repeats them. Barthes, in effect, tells a conventional story about his unconventional engagement with Balzac, as does Monk in his "analysis" of Barthes.[50] The reader can readily recognize a strong analogy between this analysis and how Monk once analyzed *Finnegans Wake* for his father at the dinner-table: "the work really reaffirms what it

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[49] Bell also sees in Monk's family relationships "the origins of his existential angst, his exaggerated sense of intellectual difference" (*Contemporary* 326). See also Ramsey, whose argument that "Everett seeks personal independence from the constricting boundaries of fixed systems, his art asserting personal identity in freely chosen, if unpredictable acts of self-creation" (131) is perhaps more true of Monk.

[50] Monk puts this slightly more opaquely: "And so we come to dismantling of the endeavor[,] as the endeavor of the text at hand, Sarrasine, not being chosen as a model at all, but accepted as one treated in a way which in turn is a model for the treatment of other texts, as is this text. A reiteration of the obvious is never wasted on the oblivious" (17). "F/V" was also published in *Callaloo* by Percival Everett in 1999, and the version reprinted in *Erasure* lacks Everett's byline, but also excludes an explanatory section in simpler expository prose: by becoming so fascinated with its own development, Barthes's analysis "seeks out the most mimetic of stories, the relationship between the creator and the created" ("F/V" 21)—the same story that "F/V" tells about its author and Barthes's text.

seems to expose. It [. . .] depends on the currency of conventional narrative for its experimental validity" (185).[51] This analogy allows the reader to integrate Monk's varied texts by recognizing that they perform "the same" analysis, and to integrate that analysis into the frame for M-Exposed by asserting that his relationship to Ben *causes* the form and content of his textual efforts (see Figure 34)—a fear to which he later gives voice.[52] M-Exposed thus replaces an individualist conception of the artist's propositional attitudes (intentions, beliefs) as "cause" of the text with a relational understanding that sees text and attitudes alike as results of a subjectivity created and maintained by social relations.

By suggesting that Monk's activity results from his constitution as a subject, the M-Exposed blend also explains why Monk sometimes has trouble understanding his own actions. Several times after he creates *My Pafology / Fuck*, he experiences clashes between his beliefs, desires, and intentions (his propositional attitudes) and the actions he takes. An angry outburst, for instance, ruins his only chance at a meaningful sexual relationship in the novel.[53] He accuses Marilyn Tilman[54] of bad taste for reading Jenkins's novel, and when she objects, he cannot seem to stop himself: "'I'm sorry,' I said, feeling genuinely bad for having sounded like I was attacking. 'It's just that I find that book an idiotic, exploitive piece of crap and I can't see how an intelligent person can take it seriously.' So much for changing my tack" (188). Looking back

[51] I take it that this is also the point of the metafictional game that Everett plays by putting F/V inside *Erasure*. At first it seems as though Monk "plagiarizes" his own creator, but then by revealing the much earlier dinnertable conversation, Everett seems to playfully suggest that he has plagiarized Monk's approach to experimental fiction.
[52] Monk reconsiders his art at one point: "not all radicalism is forward looking, and maybe I have misunderstood my experiments all along, propping up, as if propping up is needed, the artistic traditions that I have pretended to challenge" (156).
[53] This relationship stands in contradistinction to his casual sexual liaison with Linda Mallory. He calls her "the postmodern fuck," because of her overly reflexive sexual praxis (see 230).
[54] Marilyn Tilman's connection to Monk and his family, not to mention the course of their courtship, is too complex to be recounted here.

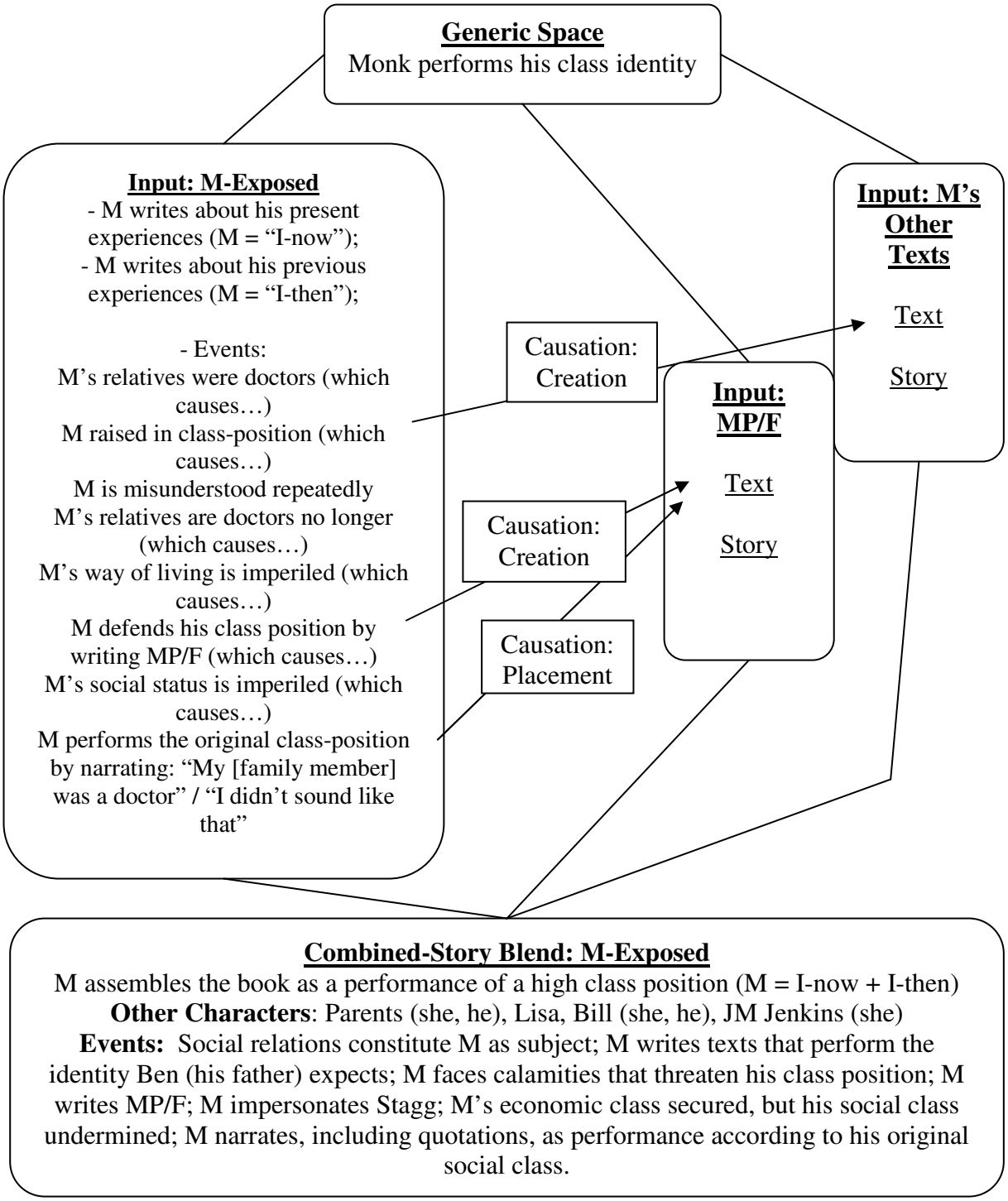

Figure 34. "Combined-story" blend for the M-Exposed story

on the incident, he later re-construes it first with the rueful "so much," then as a "snobbish" outburst, and later still as an expression of heretofore unconscious horror that he has become "an overly ironic, cynical, self-conscious and yet faithful copy of Juanita Mae Jenkins" (221). These are not beliefs he espoused at the time, nor during the intervening events; they are verbal re-constructions of (verbal) acts that he could not control, and did not understand. An alert reader may create analogies between this re-description and his first allergic reaction to Jenkins, recognizing the same fear of being "blackened" by being recognized (re-cognized, reassessed).

This kind of pattern reappears at a family wedding, and this time the socioeconomic grounds of Monk's performances are even clearer. He declares, just before the ceremony, that he will give the newlyweds ten thousand dollars, an easy promise given the millions he by this point stands to make from *Fuck*. An in-law, Leon, expresses open enthusiasm, and Monk immediately feels uncomfortable:

> I was left with a bad feeling, [. . .] because I truly didn't understand how anyone could get so excited over a mere ten thousand dollars. I saw myself exactly as I had never wanted, but always did, awkward and set apart, however unfairly and incorrectly. [. . .] The problem was the one I had always had, that I was not a *regular* guy and I so much wanted to be. Can you spell *bourgeois?* (195)

The first sentence prompts the reader to recognize Monk (as I-then) as arrogant and insensitive, but his explanation immediately turns toward a self-pity that connects uncomfortably with his social status (not to mention his father's favoritism), namely that of the "guy" who is "not [. . .] *regular*." In the incident with Marilyn, he expresses bafflement at his own actions, and only later returns to make sense of them. Monk seems to look back on it—to emplot it in his

memoir—with some clarity. In the scene with Leon, the narration smoothly transforms a case of *his* insensitivity into a case of the circumstances setting him apart "unfairly" and "incorrectly." The reader can thus recognize the same schema of back-formation, of re-describing events after the fact, this time as an event occurring in the *narration* (by Monk as I-now). He gives the reader a knowing wink by designating this discomfort as "bourgeois," but the deeper problem lies in the relationship between how he acts and how he later narrates his action.

With the above constellation of textual prompts integrated into M-Exposed, the reader can recognize a pattern in Monk's actions (as I-then) and can also recognize his act of narration (as I-now) as adhering to "the same" pattern of identity performance. M-Exposed allows the reader to gain insight into Monk's actions by realizing that his performance becomes unstable when its social substrate begins to come apart. By the time he writes *My Pafology*, Monk has been stripped of most of the relationships that he uses to make identity-claims at the novel's outset: his father and sister are dead, he has remanded his mother to a hospice for Alzheimer's treatment, his brother no longer talks to him, and, having uprooted himself from his own home and career to deal with these upheavals, he has no financial support. Integrating MP/F with M-Exposed, the reader can see it as a convenient way to regain financial stability while retaining *social* deniability: he signs it "Stagg R. Leigh."[55] This gesture is the pivotal difference: within M-Exposes the signature is an intentional act of parody, but within M-Exposed *that very intent* is understood as a back-construction.[56]

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[55] As Monk himself puts it, "So, I would not be economically oppressed because of writing a book that fell in line with the very books I deemed racist. And I would have to wear the mask of the person I was expected to be" (214).
[56] Monk almost recognizes this fact when he recasts *Fuck* as a "functional object" (221), a thing "more a chair than a painting" because he "designed it not as a work of art, but as a functional device" (209)—but he manages to avoid this near-epiphany, first by claiming pragmatic expediency (209) and then by reasserting a satiric intent: "This thing is in fact a work of art for me. It has to do the work I want it to" (221). This claim is itself a grand case of dramatic irony, for as a social act, *Fuck* never does what Monk wants it to.

In seeing narrated acts and narration itself as "the same" action, the reader can read the memoir as simply another way to retain and re-perform an upper-middle-class, race-blind intellectual identity because of the cognitive form of the M-Exposed blend. Within M-Exposes, Monk can narrate authentically by restoring contextual relationships (among texts, authors, and audiences) that clarify his individuality and intentions as author, because the blend's single-scope structure subordinates the other texts to a coherent intent that the reader creates. Within the properly double-scope M-Exposed, however, Monk achieves only an authenticity-*effect* by subsuming competing discourses under a memoir-discourse that confers on him a privileged perspective—which he invites the reader to share.

The M-Exposed blend therefore makes available a different reading of the "possession" event that introduces *My Pafology*, recasting it as a change in state. Rather than a literal "possession," the scene portrays a changing of masks, or rather, of performative style. In its early pages, Monk's narration performs a specific identity, and therefore adopts a specifiable story-form, namely the upper-middle-class intellectual family drama, replete with a secretly gay sibling, a mother with Alzheimer's, a doctor shot for performing abortions, and a father who had an affair that later surprises Monk with a heretofore unknown half-sister—a tale worthy of Philip Roth.[57] His shift in genre, read according to M-Exposed, designates an accompanying shift in Monk's identity, which is here *nothing more than* the set of relationships he sustains with others. His textual activity changes him: a reading according to M-Exposes would construe him (I-now) as possessing enough narrating agency to correct his society's misperceptions, but a reading according to M-Exposed construes his textual acts as recreating him in the image he tries to

[57] Several scholars consider the possibility that Monk's textual performance and its discontents are a matter of the genre expectations for *Fuck* (see Moynihan 114; Sánchez-Arce 149; Eaton 223), but none have yet explored those that condition the memoir. Further and broader comparisons would probably yield interesting parallels.

avoid. Where M-Exposes shows him "possessed-by" the pop-culture pseudo-loa "Stagg," M-Exposed shows him "possessed-by" a black vernacular genre that he cannot inhabit authentically, thanks to his subject-position as a member of the upper-middle-class intelligentsia.[58] His experience of involuntary action signifies his only partly-understood encounter with the socioeconomic mechanisms that constitute him as a subject.

This approach leads to a fairly pessimistic reading of the novel's conclusion. Whereas M-Exposes at least allows the reader to see Monk as taking meaningful action by admitting he wrote *Fuck*, M-Exposed construes such an action as merely one more identity-performance. Monk shifts back and forth between identities because his culture cannot allow a comfortable upper-middle-class identity for someone who also matches its construct for "black." To try to assert that mask-wearing is a subversive activity is to return to the M-Exposes blend by constructing an "essential" Monk to stand behind the masks. In contrast, the M-Exposed story aims a rather pointed critique at stances such as Ellis's New Black Aesthetic, which proclaims for its adherents the ability to "[strip] themselves of both white envy and self-hate," and create works "that either expanded or exploded old definitions of blackness, showing us the intricate, uncategorizable folks we had always known ourselves to be" (237). By presenting Monk as performing a class-based identity, M-Exposed suggests that this artistic position produces not authentic individuality, but merely shifts in performance that subscribe to an upper-class understanding of individuality.[59]

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[58] This interpretation works in much the same way as Jennings's reading of Morrison's character Jadine, in *Tar Baby*. Jadine undergoes a possession-experience recounted in the same language as Monk's and Deren's, but panics and flees. Jennings sees the event as a failed initiation, wherein Jadine is unprepared to embark on an African spiritual journey because she has no sense of herself as in any sense "African" (see Jennings 131-3).

[59] Germana seems to mean something like this when he asserts that, "as long as the concept of racial difference is considered common sense, one is condemned never to eradicate, but forever to renegotiate, its value" (144). Also, Everett remarks in an interview that "the word 'uncategorizable' is a category. Which I resent" (Stewart 303).

The twinned stories that readers can make from the text of *Erasure* also orchestrate a profound and delightful irony. M-Exposes relies on an individualism that creates a "Monk" able to take on all of the "author of" roles, and grants him the narrating agency to correct social misperceptions. This blend thus encourages an interpretation that sees *Erasure* as a withering satire of attempts to formulate an authentic Black literature; it sets one essentialism against another. By undermining authorial essentialisms, however, M-Exposed removes much of Monk's narrating agency, and reinstates a textual and ethnic determinism that critiques not only Monk's authenticity as individual coherent narrator, but also any efforts to speak meaningfully about such a state of affairs.[60] Whereas in M-Exposes Monk's individuality grounds his textual actions, in M-Exposed his material and social circumstances ground his very identity.

This situation should leave most readers troubled, however, not least because the text as a whole seems to prompt equally for each blend. Monk himself suggests one way to understand the dual prompting in his memoir's final line, "*hypotheses non fingo*," *I feign not hypotheses* (265). The line is Isaac Newton's,[61] and with these words, Newton disavows any intent to venture beyond an empirical description of physical action: "I have not as yet been able to deduce from phenomena the reason for these properties of gravity, and I do not feign hypotheses" (943, qtd. in Smith). Such a closing may seem to assert that neither combined-story blend fully captures the text, and that the undecideability between them is the novel's most all-encompassing consequence. However, I argue that the "either/or" or "neither/nor" readings are

[60] This particular double-bind owes much, I think, to the work of Gayatri Spivak, who designs her concept of "strategic essentialism" (instrumentally using essentialisms against each other, as in M-Exposes) to combat precisely the "speechlessness" that results from such overly thorough deconstruction (which, like M-Exposed, questions the instrumental logic of M-Exposes by dividing its "in-dividual" subject along the seams of its identity performances).
[61] It appears in the "General Scholium" section appended to the 1713 edition of *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*.

simply incomplete ways to say that the novel demands a way to integrate the blends, accepting both conceptions of narrating agency and reliability. Monk's text includes many references to and quotations from *Invisible Man*, and their frequency and prominence increases as Monk begins to impersonate Stagg. Ralph Ellison's novel of course articulates exactly the perception of duality that the twinned blends in *Erasure* produce,[62] a fact that Monk seems to know. These factors can encourage the determined reader to combine M-Exposes and M-Exposed, producing a blended story-world.

Second-Order Combined-Story Blend: M-Initiated

The style and tone of Monk's discourse undergoes a profound shift as he begins to impersonate Stagg. The initial minimalism and mostly traditional realism of the early chapters gradually gives way to a surreal and sometimes near-allegorical mode. The reader meets the unexplained segment of Percival Everett's short story "Meiosis,"[63] as well as characters whose names edge toward stereotype, in the case of the film producer Wiley Morgenstein, and symbol, in the case of the manager of Kenya Dunston's talk-show, whose name is Tod Weiß, literally "white death" (replete with the German alphabetical character). What is more, allusions to *Invisible Man* broaden and deepen over the course of the book's second half, requiring the reader

[62] As Ellison himself puts it, language "has the potency to revive and make us free," but "also the power to blind, imprison, and destroy. The essence of the word is its ambivalence, and in fiction it is never so effective and revealing as when both potentials are operating simultaneously" ("Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity" 81, qtd. in Germana 138).

[63] In the part included in *Erasure*, an African American character beats a white character at a quiz-show stacked against him, but proves unable to impress the (of course white) staff and audience. Makeup crews prepare him for his TV appearance by making his face look darker, an experience Monk and Van Go share (see *Erasure* 173, 245-6); for further discussion relating this episode to similar portrayals in the African American novel tradition, see Fett (194-7). In Everett's "Meiosis" the reader finds more background for "Tom Wahzetepe," who goes home to unintentionally incite a riot ("meiosis" refers to the cell-division process that produces spores).

to revise again the story-world sense of Monk's actions, intentions, and narration. By re-conceiving Monk's intentions as a specific kind of *self-exposure*, the reader can align and integrate the combined-story blends. The resultant second-order combined-story blend, which I will call "M-Initiated," allows the reader to reconstruct a narrating activity simultaneously in and out of Monk's control. His narration portrays (renders narratable) a process of recognition that is more than simply a change in knowledge or style; it is a process of initiation. This story-configuration lets further interpretations (of the possession scene, of the implied author's status) avoid the infinite regress of the narrating-agency double-bind.

Allusions to *Invisible Man* appear in the text in at least two different ways: as direct references and quotations within the narration, and as details that surface more ambiguously within the narrated world. The first category includes the direct quotations, such as the expostulation "Behold the invisible!" (214, 219; *IM* 495-6), the lines "*Jelly, Jelly / Jelly / All night long*" (214, italics in original; it is also a popular song—see *IM* 486), or "*Ain't you Rine the Runner?*" (216, *IM* 491). Unlike the preceding interpolations, these allusions appear without introduction or identification in the narrative memoir. Furthermore, only the reader familiar with *Invisible Man* will be able to conclude from these elements that Monk knows the book, and has inserted the lines with some intention—other readers may conclude that the narrator is simply becoming psychologically or emotionally unstable.

To incorporate the sudden interruption of Ellison's novel in the text, the reader has to employ the same logic that allowed for the inclusion of the earlier interpolated texts, assigning to Monk as I-now the causal role whose effect is the lines' appearance here, and thereby working back toward his process of emplotment, and thence to his intent and the story-world. The present

blend is more complex, however, for nothing in Monk's narration directly names Ellison or his book. The reader has to fall back on the simple cause-effect connection to assert that the quotations are not in some way accidental, and then has to employ analogy to explain why. For example, one of *IM*'s central events involves the nameless protagonist's impersonation of the small-time racketeer Rinehart, or "Rine the Runner," effected by a careful array of code-switches (in both verbal and body language) and a pair of sunglasses. A reader familiar with *IM* can recognize the plethora of analogies between this situation (this complex coordination of schemas) and the situation in *Erasure*, wherein Monk has begun to carry out an impersonation of "Stagg R. Leigh" using clothes, demeanor, and yes, sunglasses.[64] Indeed, the "Jelly" quotation is a song that plays on a jukebox during a scene in *IM* when the protagonist's Rine disguise gets him into a fight with a former ally; the Invisible Man remarks, "The glasses were working too well" (*IM* 488). These analogies prompt two related kinds of blend: the conclusion that Monk (as I-then) and the Invisible Man undergo somehow "the same" experiences (a mirror blend, and a simple metaphor), and more importantly, that Monk (as I-now) *also* recognizes that metaphorical connection.

This second conclusion is a blend of a different form, one that integrates the mirror-blend that identifies Monk with the Invisible Man into the blended sense of Monk's narrating activity in M-Exposes or M-Exposed, thus revising—drastically—the sense of Monk's intentions as

[64] The recurrence of the sunglasses makes me wonder if Everett intends a reference to the Voudoun loa Ghede, rather than Legba (see e.g. Deren 282), but this is a matter for a different analysis. The phrase "behold the invisible" invites further comparisons, since it is taken from the pamphlet advertising Rinehart's dubious preaching. Indeed, the very names of the alter-identities offer parallels: Rinehart the Runner as the *hart* to Lee's *stag* (a parallel whose recognition I owe to Amy Elias). The distinction between the running hart and the association of the stag with the "lee," that which is (perhaps safely) out of the wind deserves consideration in its own right. So, too, does the parallel between the Invisible Man's musing over Rinehart's "rind" and "heart" (*IM* 498) and Monk's musing over "sapwood" and "heartwood" (*E* 13). I will not carry such analyses further here, except to suggest that Stagg is indeed for Monk as much an economic shelter as an identity performance.

narrator. Under both story-world blends, the character-construct "Monk" appears to produce his memoir by way of a process of emplotment, transforming experience into text. After the "jelly" and "behold" allusions appear, however, the reader increasingly has to revise this sense of emplotment, for *Invisible Man* begins to mediate between Monk's experience and his ordering and textual rendering of that experience. The text pushes the reader to see Monk as now undertaking a project akin to Sam and Hailey's in *Only Revolutions*, a self-allegorizing orchestration of personal experience according to another text, rather than a straightforward emplotment. Monk's intentions in M-Exposes (exposing racist expectations) allign with the consequences of M-Exposed (revealing complicity with those expectations) to produce a self-exposure that portrays his own collisions and collusions (with those racializing expectations). The alignment between intention and outcome allows a causal link to be reestablished between intent and textual form, but only insofar as that intent conforms to the unwilled recognition of the Invisible Man's narrative within Monk's own.

As Nadel and others have argued, Ellison's novel presents a double-bind, wherein a black man can "[sell] his image" to secure his economic survival, but by so doing thereby erases himself, for "So long as he lived in the realm of others' assumptions, his life could not have its own meaning" (Nadel 81). For the black men in *IM*, "[t]he only hope for freedom from that double bind—the double bind first acknowledged by the Invisible Man's grandfather—is to make others aware of that bind in which their sense of meaning is centered" (81). This is the final gesture that the Invisible Man performs through his narrative.[65] He asks the reader,

[65] For further discussion of the *IM* double-bind, see Germana (135) and Coleman (132). Nadel actually envisions a doubled communication of double-binds, seeing Tod Clifton's death as enacting the same communication as the Invisible Man eventually conveys: by dying in a seemingly useless assault, Tod "begins the Invisible Man on his road to salvation" (Nadel 81).

rhetorically, "Being invisible and without substance, a disembodied voice, as it were, what else could I do? What else but try to tell you what was really happening when your eyes were looking through?" (*IM* 581)—but then he places his achievement under erasure by expressing his "fear": "Who knows but that, on lower frequencies, I speak for you?" (581)

Monk identifies this erased-narration of a double-bind[66] in his own memoir. At some point after he begins narrating, he recognizes not only his experience, but also *his account of that experience* as analogous to that of the Invisible Man, and begins to inscribe the analogies into his memoir. By completing the M-Initiated blend, the reader thus renders narratable a different kind of action performed by Monk's narration, namely one of recognition and acceptance (see Figure 35). Using the M-Initiated blend, the reader can integrate the novel's closing sections with the story-world in such a way as to escape the aporetic hesitation between M-Exposes and M-Exposed.

At the ceremony that will confer the "Book Award" on *Fuck*, Monk stands up, ostensibly to expose his doubled identity as Stagg, but finds himself inhabiting a delirious dream-world. In the midst of I-then's unsteady progress toward the stage, I-now interjects a quotation, "*But somehow the floor had now turned to sand…*" (264, his italics; *IM* 569), but then describes the sand-experience as that of I-then: "I couldn't believe that I was walking through sand, through dream sand" (264). Reading according to M-Initiated, the reader can interpret this narration as two distinct activities: Monk as I-then underwent a hallucinatory experience drawn from his

[66] See also Coleman (139). Of course, what the Invisible Man thinks is not necessarily what Ellison, as a citizen of the postwar U.S., actually thought. Germana argues that the chief wedge between Ellison and the Black Arts Movement was Ellison's belief in "liberal individualism" (Germana 144). Everett shares this view in an interview, where he asserts that Ellison's faith is "wonderfully naïve, amazingly naïve"—but of course, only because "we have the benefit of time, after his thinking" (Stewart 313). Given the text of *IM*, I find it difficult to believe that Ellison ever had quite such a naïve faith, but I will not pursue this argument further here.

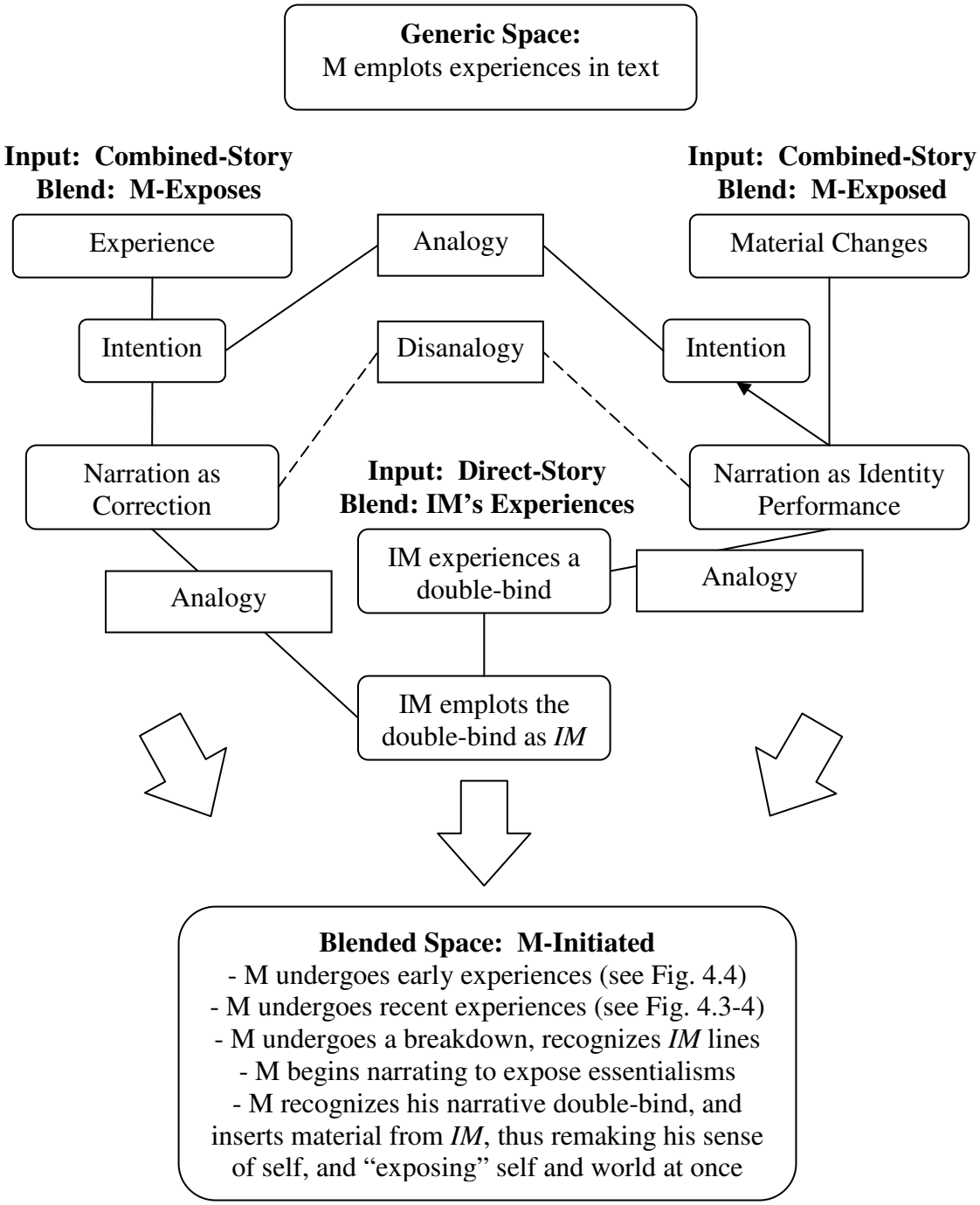

Figure 35. "Second-order combined-story" blend for the "M-Initiated" story

knowledge of *IM*, specifically the Invisible Man's own delirious dream; and also, by this point in his narration, Monk as I-now imports a direct quotation in order to present the experience not as a simply baffling situation, but as legible according to the story-world frames from Ellison's text. He then recounts seeing his own reflection—as Stagg—speak to him in the words of the Invisible Man's sometime associate, Brother Jack: "Now you're free of illusion," and "How does it feel to be free of one's illusions?" (264, *IM* 569). Monk answers his vision out loud, to the consternation of onlookers: "I know those lines," and then, "The answer is *Painful and empty*" (265, italics in original), and the italicized words are of course also the Invisible Man's answer to the same question (*IM* 569). He then addresses a camera and utters his final line as I-then, a linguistic performance that will return the reader to the narrating situation of the memoir's earliest pages: "Egads, I'm on television" (265). He renders Van Go Jenkin's final speech act in the linguistic codes of his own upper-class identity.[67]

Monk performs again the memoir's frequent act of textual juxtaposition, but here the reader has to integrate this already complex act with a combined-story blend that has changed drastically since the reader's first encounter with *My Pafology*. By rendering his breakdown (as I-then) in terms of the Invisible Man's dream-vision, Monk invites the reader to create connections of analogy and disanalogy between the two events. Injured in a fall and half-delirious, Ellison's protagonist dreams himself a captive. As he later recounts, "I lay prisoner of a group consisting of" all those who "had run me" (*IM* 569), i.e., all the people to whose expectations he had performed, thus erasing himself. In his dream, they try to force him to rejoin

[67] Earlier in the book the exclamation "egads" appears in an analepsis as a signifier of Monk's socioeconomic difference: "on a basketball court [. . .] upon missing a shot I muttered *Egads*" (2). He later recounts a similar event, admitting that he missed a shot because he was thinking about Hegel (133), which earns him mockery from his fellow players.

them, and when he refuses, they castrate him and hang his organs under an "armored bridge" over water. I do not want to get too involved in a reading of the scene, but at this point the Invisible Man remains a reliable narrator, at least of his dream-experience. Furthermore, readers may judge the dream itself an accurate portrayal of the Invisible Man's experience, especially in its metaphorical rendering of the disempowering results of the Middle Passage. Monk experiences an analogous series of (explicitly hallucinatory) perceptual events, but instead of seeing enemy-manipulators, he sees his deceased or estranged family, as well as his academic colleagues. Instead of an external nemesis, he sees Stagg, his own creation and performance. Finally, Monk's vision renders the family presences not as imprisoning enemies, but as encouraging friends: "all pressed around me, urging me forward" (264).

Rebuilding Monk (I-now) as having undergone a drastic change in consciousness, the reader can now trace the roots (and routes) of that change to this crucial moment of breakdown (as I-then). The preceding blends afford crucial insights: the people he sees are those who constitute the identity he performs by uttering his final line, "Egads, I'm on television," and the person who taunts him about illusions is his own alternate "Stagg" identity. That is to say, the Invisible Man dreams an accurate account of his enemies, but Monk dreams of facing mirrors. These analogies and disanalogies allow the reader to integrate the "Egads" line with M-Initiated as a linguistic performance that signifies differently when spoken and when recounted. As his "uninitiated" performance of textual juxtaposition, the line repeats the Invisible Man's double-bind, committing Monk to a class divide that remains—against his will—legible as a racializing divide. He tells the truth about his authorship, but in so doing carries out a dissociating performance that allows him to avoid being "blackened" by the same discourse as Juanita Mae

Jenkins. This is why his upper-class colleagues and family so eagerly urge him forward.

As direct discourse quoted in his "initiated" narration, however, the line presents his performance *as* the Invisible Man's narrating act, resulting in a very different claim: rather than claiming an individualist prerogative to forge his own path, Monk (as I-now) claims a literary ancestor—and also makes the additional claim that the experience of the double-bind articulated there remains relevant nearly a half-century later.[68]

By combining divergent versions of Monk's relationship to his story-world and his memoir, then, the M-Initiated blend also integrates the divergent conceptions of his sense of self. He is no longer simply a self-determining individual, but neither is he simply a construct of his circumstances. Rather, as in the case of Nora/Blanche (in *Half Life*) and Sam and Hailey (in *Only Revolutions*), what constitutes Monk's individuality is his consciousness that his account never quite suffices—that the language he has to use is that of his contextual situation and his literary forebears. It is only by recognizing his account as therefore analogous to that of Ellison's protagonist, and by encoding that recognition with the *IM* quotations, that he can give a textual account of himself that does not commit his memoir to the same double-bind.

Conclusion

The M-Initiated blend allows for three distinct insights into how *Erasure* works. First, by integrating M-Exposes and M-Exposed, as well as these blends' versions of Monk's sense of self, M-Initiated also combines their versions of narrating agency. By recognizing Monk as

[68] This conclusion parallels, but also takes a step beyond the participatory conclusion Coleman attributes to Johnson: "the text is open-ended because each [African American] author phenomenologically brackets the written textual portrayals of other authors and poses his own fresh, new portrayal as part of the intertextual process" (146).

engaged in a process of recognition, wherein he sees the limitations of his own act of narration and successfully encodes them into his discourse, the reader reconstitutes him as what Diane Coole (following Butler) calls a "singularity," an intersection of the cognitive frames provided by social discourse (a description of action "from the outside"), and the use of those frames in an act of emplotment (describing action "from the inside," in the first-person). As Butler might put it, this intersection, as action, is "neither fully determined nor radically free" (19), but where both Butler and Coole frame such action according to the double negativity of the "neither/nor," Everett's novel allows the reader to recreate the positive "both/and": Monk is both in control of and controlled by his text, and is therefore both reliable and unreliable with respect to his interpretations and evaluations—but only insofar as he recognizes, accepts, and thereby reorganizes his narrating activity as a literary lineage. By making Monk's change of awareness narratable for the reader, rather than simply letting him narrate it, the text presents Monk as freeing himself of his *illusions* by his act of commitment to his *allusions*. Only by reconceiving Monk's "self" as a *narrative* self, and by recognizing its continuing incompletion and its inclusion of otherness (in the form of his father's "illness," as well as Ellison's or Wright's writing), can the reader attain the insight into a conception of narrating agency that is simultaneously determined and free.

This integration allows the second insight, a third reinterpretation of the "possession" scene. I argue that what the novel's final events reveal, when read according to the M-Initiated blend, is that Monk is not being possessed by "Stagg," nor simply by the societal expectations he later claims to attempt to manipulate—but rather by none other than the Invisible Man himself. A key textual element connects the *IM* allusions with the possession-frame. In the Voudoun

tradition, the loa are said to reside beneath deep barriers of soil and water. As Monk describes wanting to curtail further performative appearances of "Stagg" (a course of action he does not immediately pursue), he declares that Stagg "would talk to the editor a few more times, then disappear, like *down a hole*" (162, my emphasis). The same phrase appears later, as Monk donates a melon to a man he meets on the street, who seems to disappear: "I looked down for my keys, then back to the man and he was gone, as if sucked *down a hole*" (237, my emphasis). Before disappearing, this mysterious man sings "*Bread and wine*," the song that also appears in *IM*. This slender thread connects the Stagg performance with the Invisible Man's Rinehart performance (the context for the quotation) *and* the anomalous *IM* plot elements in *Erasure*—what might go back "down a hole" has arrived in the story world from underground, much like the pages of *IM* itself,[69] but here the term has earned a new spiritual meaning.

As scholars of West and Central African traditions make clear, the loa and similar possession-capable entities are principles or ways of seeing, and not specific ancestors or "gods" (both of which are concepts deployed by writers from Eurocentric religions),[70] and it seems fair to say that the Invisible Man, as a narrative embodiment of the double-bind of (re)writing race, constitutes a contemporary version of just such a concept. The possession scene can thus be read not simply as an isolated incident, but a part of a ceremony of initiation that spans the entire story. Like Morrison's character Jadine, the aptly-named *Monk* is initially an unwilling and unprepared participant, and his initial possession-experiences—the writing of *My Pafology* and

[69] Indeed, the Invisible Man's dream vision occurs after he falls through a manhole cover; people shout at him "down the hole" (*IM* 565), and a number of sly puns over holes and wholes ensue (565-72). After the dream of castration he realizes that, "in spite of the dream, I was whole" and decides not to return to "my old life" but rather to "take up residence underground" (571).

[70] See Jennings (82-5), Mbiti (25, 26, and Chapter 8).

the performances as Stagg—produce a chaotic, divided self.[71] Only in recognizing his experience, by accepting and recounting his visions as the text of *IM*, does Monk surpass Jadine and become an initiate.

Everett's gesture in including this ceremony is complex, however. He articulates an acceptance of something intrinsically African American (or perhaps Black Atlantic, to borrow Gilroy's phrase) about the Invisible Man's narrative—hence his ability to "ride Monk's head." But by choosing Ellison's protagonist[72] rather than a literal Haitian or African loa, Everett also attempts to divest himself of commitments to racial heritage by an ontology of blood or genetic heredity, while retaining and renewing a sense of shared socio-cultural experience. The Invisible Man's dream-vision, his "disillusionment," is a vision of his social relationship to others and to his historical context, and thence to his sense of social displacement as a result of the African diaspora within (and as a result of the actions of) a Eurocentric society. It is the *narrative* authenticity of this experience, and not its expression as a racial characteristic, that Everett affirms.[73]

Where, under either M-Exposes or M-Exposed, metaphorical descriptions might have seemed to connect "Black" experience simply with the commercialized Stagg, or with identity-performances, such passages signify differently under M-Initiated. For instance, Monk describes "Stagg's" journey to Dunston's studio in broadly resonant terms: "Stagg takes the subway, the

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[71] Dayan remarks on the possible negative consequences of unprepared possession (19), a point Jennings also mentions in her discussion of Jadine's experience (133).

[72] In an interview, Everett confirms that "I just happened to land on Ellison as a way for me to accept the fact that I work in a tradition. And it could have been possibly another book," except that Ellison references are "the ones that are more fun" (Stewart 306).

[73] I would say that he seeks to avoid the conclusion that Coleman sees written into so many postmodernist black novels, that "the black writer/subject must lose its black voice in [the white postmodernist] tradition before it can free itself" (144). Therefore, as I will mention again below, his portrayal parallels Paul Gilroy's discussion of the theory and usage of the term "diaspora."

underground, to the studio, realizing as the train rumbles that so does his stomach. He is starving. Other stomachs rumble. He is encased with other black men. Though it is a golden day outside, they cruise below the world to their destination" (246). The words wear their thematic resonances on their sleeves, portraying the literal experience of travel as the figurative and literary historical experience of African American transit—as the Middle Passage, and the underground railroad—but also as Ralph Ellison's literary *account of* those transits and their results: the phrase "golden day" refers to the bar and brothel in *IM*, scene of a disastrous collision of socioeconomic worlds. Nadel connects the name "golden day" to Lewis Mumford's book of the same title. As Nadel describes it, Mumford's book calls the

> period from 1830 to 1860 [. . .] the period when the individual had the greatest hopes of triumphing. Alas (a stage word Mumford uses more than once), he did not. Industrialism, the machine, the Gilded Age triumphed; materialism, cynicism, shallowness replaced idealism, optimism, depth. Revealing this tragedy is the purpose of Mumford's book. (86)

In *Erasure*, a novel so vitally concerned with a particular variety of narrating agency, can this choice of quotation, replete with its embedded allusion, be an accident? Of course not, and Everett wants us to know it. What is more, the journey "below the world to their destination" also resonates with the vocabulary of traditional African cosmologies.

These insights make possible a third, a sense that Everett articulates a double-edged critique of the idea of "African American" or "Black" writing that is closely akin to Danielewski's critique of American self-allegorization. He seems to me to demonstrate a guarded acceptance of the Black aesthetics advanced by Morrison, Jennings, and Bell, while

retaining an objection similar to Paul Gilroy's: that too close an adherence to even a well-meaning strategic essentialism—as in Bell's assertion of "core black identities"[74]—risks reproducing racializing discourse by portraying social difference as racial difference. The sense of a shared *narrative*, accepted and reiterated in an act of what Ricoeur might call "participatory belonging" (1: 194) seems to be what Everett offers as a way to stake out a shared experience worth rallying around.[75] In this respect, Monk's account seems to parallel the theoretical formulation of subjectivity and affect to which Gilroy refers in his broad definition of "diaspora" as a hybrid "ecology of identification" (Gilroy 123). Gilroy sees the idea of "identity" as a shortcut past more complex "processes of identification" (Gilroy 132), and Monk shows the reader the subjective experience—difficult, painful, and ceaselessly self-reflexive—of such processes.[76]

Be these potential cognitive maneuvers ever so convincing, however, *Erasure* retains some of the ambivalence so famously articulated in *Invisible Man*. Not all readers may find all of these blends rewarding, and therefore may not venture beyond M-Exposes or M-Exposed. Even those who arrive at the M-Initiated story-world may not find Monk's experience relevant to their own needs, desires, or perceptions of their own life or world (a point made clearer in

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[74] For more on this subject, see Bell's description (*Contemporary* 9-12), as well as his explicit avowal of the strategic-essentialist method (50-51). Jennings also reads some of Morrison's books as advancing a strategic-essentialist understanding of Black identity; see e.g. the analysis of *Tar Baby* (123). To strategic essentialism Gilroy opposes a "strategic universalism" (96).

[75] I would therefore argue that he and Bell have a lot in common. Bell argues, quoting Stuart Hall, that "identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (qtd. in Bell, *Contemporary* 328), and, if I understand Bell correctly, that African American identities hinge upon *shared* narrative self-constructions (328). It also seems as though he would agree with Ellis's assertion that "We, instead, '*chose* blackness' as Lisa Jones put it. We don't take our 'soul' for granted because we have to fight to maintain it" (Ellis, "Response" 251).

[76] I find it fascinating that some scholars tell what amounts to the M-Exposed story about Gilroy's *Against Race*, suggesting that he may be reinforcing the very discourses he critiques. For just such an account, as well as a detailed discussion of Gilroy's potential Eurocentrism, and the potential problems with his humanist perspective, see Simon Gikandi's review (601, 607, 603, respectively). Gikandi also suggests that what he calls Gilroy's "cosmopolitanism" neglects conceptions of pan-African identification (600).

Ricoeur's division between "mimesis$_2$" and "mimesis$_3$"). Readers from varying backgrounds simply may not find Monk's initiation enlightening or persuasive, in much the same way that not all readers have been satisfied with Trey Ellis's artistic concept of a "New Black Aesthetic" or Gilroy's even more theoretical "strategic universalism." Furthermore, the vast and elaborate blending processes outlined here depend heavily for their strength upon the reader's working *historical* knowledge of texts by black men.[77] A reader unfamiliar with *Native Son* can at least find its mention in the text, but the exhortation, "Behold the invisible!" has little perlocutionary effect—little chance of prompting the reader to change the story-world drastically, in my analysis—if the reader does not recognize the allusion and spend enough time considering what it does to Monk's storytelling.[78] I see these uncertainties as part of the same pattern of high-stakes textual recognition illustrated in the blends that render Nora/Blanche legible as human (in *Half Life*) and that require the reader's knowledge of world history (in *Only Revolutions*): the reader's role in constructing Monk as a narrator makes her share responsibility for the story-world blend that results. It is my hope that the present analysis of the novel's complex system of prompts gives its cognitive form sufficient clarity to let it escape future construal as an exercise in self-defeating irony.[79]

As in the previous chapters, by playing out how *Erasure*'s complex allusions work as cognitive prompts, I have not only created a formal account of the story-world, but also a

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[77] His emphasis on male writing, and his dubious portrayals of black women (Jenkins and the Oprah stand-in Kenya Dunston) risk earning Everett the same indictments of misogyny leveled at Ishmael Reed (for a summary of which, see McGee's *The Ends of Race*). So long as *Erasure* can be read as putting Monk through an initiation ritual, as I argue here, Everett himself can be read as safely affirming Morrison's Black aesthetic project, while still questioning the values of other popular novelists and celebrities.

[78] Everett in one interview issues a positively Joycean edict: "I do expect a reader to study. If you want to get through the layers of meaning, it requires some work" (Stewart 320).

[79] In terms of the novel's critical reception, then, I tend to side with Russett's argument that "*Erasure* is indisputably an African- American novel, with and without irony" (365), over and against Gysin's more pessimistic assessment.

rudimentary character-like account of how the reader may understand (or even see herself fitting) the addressee's role in the text. This role has in all three chapters thus far involved an active participation in what might be called a frame of *bearing witness*, to Nora/Blanche's self-narration in *Half Life*, to Sam and Hailey's self-allegorization in *Only Revolutions*, and to Monk's initiation in *Erasure*. It is to that role—and to further gamesmanship in a textual manipulation of that role—that I turn in my final brief chapter, as I consider the manipulation of a "reader" in the hypertext novel *Califia*.

V. Of Maps and Rabbits: Participation and Closure in *Califia*

"This project is intended to be a virtual treasure map—we hope you will follow the trails in any manner you please" (*Califia*, Roadhead 9). With these words, M.D. Coverley's hypertext novel *Califia* invites the reader into an open-ended story, a treasure-hunt that has yet to be concluded. The novel's three narrators present their text as an archive containing historical materials and records of their own efforts, which they encourage the reader to use in uncovering a lost stash of California gold. As the reader explores hundreds of virtual pages of text and graphics, however, *Califia* gradually closes itself off to intervention, becoming less like a game or puzzle and more like a very convoluted story. Likewise, its narrator-protagonists begin to find their treasure-hunt increasingly foreclosed, its success or failure made irrelevant by a long history of dispossession and exploitation, perpetrated by moneyed interests and con-men. As their account of their journeys comes to an end, however, they realize that they have recovered stories of four generations of their ancestors. The parallel discovery-sequence prompts the reader to integrate his or her own experience of the text with the narrators' experience in the story-world, recognizing that the goal has been—all along—to forge a relationship between an individual story of the present and a chronicle of the past—a process of historical placement that Paul Ricoeur calls "participatory belonging." The final blended story-world renders narratable for the reader a process of enchantment, disillusionment, and re-enchantment that also echoes the process of story-production, story-dispersion, and re-blended story-coherence elaborated in the course of this dissertation. Coverley (*nom de plume* of Marjorie Luesebrink) has created a

"treasure map" indeed, a *cognitive* map[1] that demonstrates how a seemingly closed but recursive narrative text can render narratable an open process of self-creation and historical revision. By allowing the reader an active role in story-world reconstruction and recognition, but not in discourse-production, *Califia* also simultaneously refutes and reaffirms early claims that the supposed "interactivity" of hypertext literature allows readers to re-write the text's story. It does indeed involve the reader meaningfully in the production of story, but its interactivity results from the reader's complex cognitive story-reading process, and not from her direct modification or navigation of the text.

In each of the texts considered in the preceding chapters, the narrators implicitly address a reader, proffering their narratives as accounts of their experiences. I have argued that their texts make their narrating activity itself narratable (*qua* action) for the reader, and the cumulative effect makes the reader's activity a form of *bearing witness*. Each novel implies that the reader is the recipient of a document that maintains an indexical connection[2] to a narrator who arranged the text in just this way. In *Half Life* and *Erasure*, the reader finds a memoir or journal, and although in *Only Revolutions* the situation is more ambiguous, the song or stream-of-consciousness discourse bears the imprint of Sam and Hailey's narrating choices. Indeed, Danielewski opens both of the initial pages of his double-headed novel with the intriguing sentence, "*You were there*" (italics in original). In each case, the reader becomes the grounding for such coherence as the texts have, creating (and re-creating) as she reads the narrator's individuality, subjectivity, and relationship with the narrated world. *Califia* makes this process

[1] Jameson's project of "cognitive mapping" relates directly to his conception of late-capitalism's disorienting features. I do not propose to pursue a Marxist perspective here; rather, the idea of adequacy he suggests seems appropriate to the treasure-map metaphor that *Califia* employs.

[2] All of these novels suggest that such connections are possibly posthumous. The reader's activity might thus merit reconsideration as a friendly kind of necromancy.

explicit, including a "you" pronoun in several textual fragments addressed to the reader, and encouraging the reader to conceive of his or her own activity as part of the story-world.

Califia comes to the reader on a CD-ROM, and when activated, the text and graphics appear in a window akin to an Internet browser, beginning with a title screen identical to the CD case's cover. Instead of turning pages, the reader clicks links to move from one screen[33] to the next, sometimes in a linear book-like series, but just as often along one of several possible "paths." A sequence of introductory screens presents the basic situation: Augusta Summerland's father has died and his study has been ransacked, leaving her with little money, a mother under expensive inpatient care for Alzheimer's disease, and a vast array of suggestive documents. A family myth—that the Summerlands have been on the trail of a lost stash of nineteenth-century gold—becomes reality. *Califia* presents this situation as a personal website, an immersive online archive created by Augusta and her co-conspirators, Kaye Beveridge and Calvin (initially *sans* surname), and embellished with photographs, drawings, maps, and the occasional musical theme. Each narrator provides an account of their search so far: Augusta tells a linear story that recounts their recent activities, while Calvin and Kaye, in their own distinctive styles, tell more disparate stories about the history of the "Califia gold," with an eye to its possible whereabouts. The account unfolds in four distinct parts, labeled and mapped as compass directions (South, East, North, West) within a circular "Solar Table" graphical image (see Figure 36).

In recounting the reading process *Califia* affords, I use the term "screen" to describe the text and graphics contained within the browser window, because the term signifies the text's apparent stability and coherence, but also its replaceability. Individual screens do not change of

[3] I eschew the practice of calling each window's contents a "lexia," just as I would "page," because of the critical connotative baggage the terms carry. The term "node" also seems too abstract and technical to refer to the small two-dimensional displays that *Califia* presents.

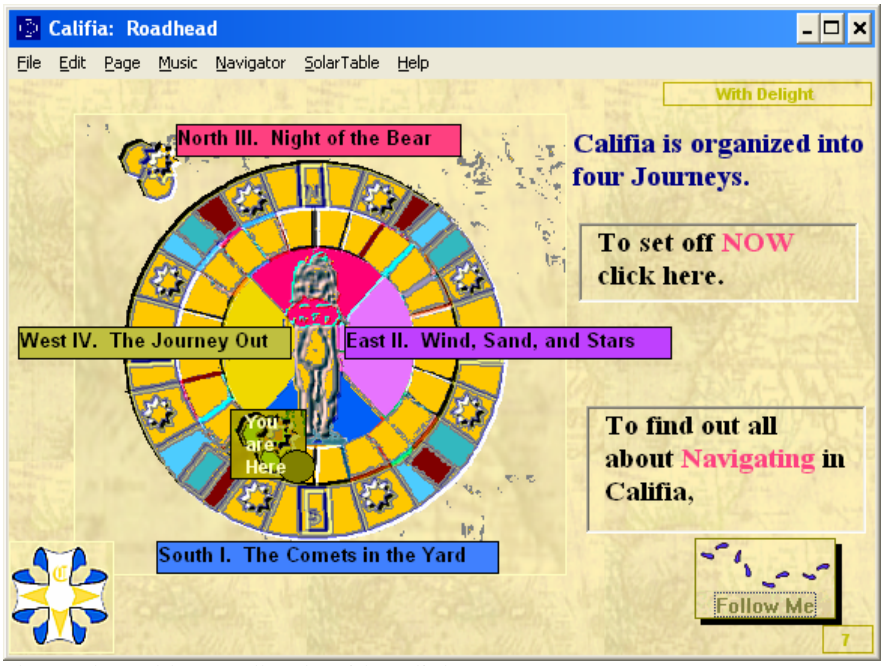

Figure 36. The *Califia* Solar Table (Roadhead, With Delight, 7)

their own accord, allowing the reader the time to consider her options or linger over interesting material. And yet, once she decides to "move," to click a link, new material fills the frame. Since this same interface holds each screen, the series of screens do not seem quite as distinct from one another as the physical pages in a book. Paging back and forth, or backtracking, is more difficult than a print text, albeit far less difficult than in some early hypertext fictions.

As the reader proceeds and the material accumulates, it becomes increasingly clear that the three protagonists are the inheritors of a long history of swindles, pyramid schemes, and outright robbery and murder. Their families have come out on the losing side of most of these, leaving them dispossessed of land, legacy, and the very stories of their forebears. These revelations drastically change the nature of the reader's involvement, for what began as an open-ended treasure hunt becomes something much more closely akin to *Half Life* or *Erasure*: a

threefold memoir of rediscovered family history.

Although the earliest of the twenty-first-century texts considered in this dissertation,[4] *Califia* has also received the least sustained critical attention, at least in part thanks to its status as "hypertext fiction." The genre has been marginalized, thanks to early hyperbolic claims that all such texts offer the reader an interactive "virtual reality" experience, or that their linked structure makes the reader a "writer." Such claims have their origins in the hypertext fiction and criticism associated with Michael Joyce, George P. Landow, and Stuart Moulthrop, beginning in the 1980s, and continued in further experiments in the 1990s. They designed creative texts that purported to allow the reader to decide how a story turned out, or to emphasize the supposed injustice of conventional narratives that only allow the reader to read-out a single sequence of events (see for example Joyce's *afternoon*, or Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*).

Regardless of whether or not narrative *ought* to "side-shadow" alternate possible event-sequences (for more on this, see Morson), the simple assertion that hypertext fiction produces a sense of control over the story, or a sense of freedom to navigate (in *Califia*'s words, "in any manner you please") has always been problematic. As early as 1991, critics such as Jane Yellowlees Douglas and Espen Aarseth had already pointed out that the navigation options are themselves part of the text put in place by the hypertext's creator. Actual readers tend to approach hypertext labyrinths as simple mazes, puzzles with one way through—and they tend to get frustrated when the texts (particularly Joyce's *afternoon*, or Moulthrop's *Hegirascope*) offer very few navigation-aids.[5] The purported experience of textual liberation becomes a hunt for

[4] Compare *Half Life* (2006), *Only Revolutions* (2006), and *Erasure* (2001), to *Califia* (2000). Earlier versions of *Califia* had been in circulation on the Internet at least as early as 1998.

[5] See for example Moulthrop's 1991 report of readerly confusion in "Reading from the Map," and recent discussions in the same vein by Hartling and Pinder, as well as Evans and Po's 2007 report of student reactions.

"the right way" through the maze. For this reason, many digital media scholars regard hypertext fiction as a mere stepping-stone, a developmental dead-end on a road that leads straight to immersive computer games (virtual reality); social software such as blogs, discussion boards, and Facebook ("writerly" text); and ultimately, programs such as Second Life (virtual reality and user-created material). Like N. Katherine Hayles and Marie-Laure Ryan, Joyce and Moulthrop have moved on to other forms of multimedia digital experience (see Moulthrop's "You Say You Want a Revolution?" and Joyce's "Café Cul-de-Sac"; Pinder also summarizes this trajectory), but their earliest efforts remain the "classical" assertions about hypertext, and continue to be reiterated by new creative and critical artists.[6]

Extant criticism on *Califia* divides almost exactly along the battle-lines of the "interactivity" debate. Ryan briefly notes that *Califia*'s use of graphics far outpaces more familiar hypertexts such as Michael Joyce's *afternoon* or Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, and that it puts graphics and links in the service of a powerful narrative backbone. She and Jaishree Odin both interpret *Califia* as a story of anamnesis, seeing the characters as restoring their connections to their California homeland (see Ryan 152). Odin emphasizes the stories of people marginalized in contemporary histories of California, including the Chumash people, Chinese immigrants, and women of many nationalities and ethnicities (see Odin para 2). These interpretations directly contradict Guertin's earlier argument that, by subjecting the reader to an information overload, the text replicates the cognitive situation of Augusta's mother Violet, who

[6] See for instance the recent *Toc: A Novel*, and on the critical side, Hayles's article on *Patchwork Girl*, "Flickering Connectivities." More recently, Laccetti claims that the medium destabilizes narrative by enabling "numerous possibilities for beginnings and, therefore, sequentialities" (181), and Parker claims that the medium denies the reader "a causally connected beginning, middle, and end" (41). See also Alamán (298), and even Pinder (50-51). Luesebrink says she wanted "to construct a narrative that would support readings in any direction" (Orihuela, "Interview" para 9; see also Luesebrink para 21).

succumbs to Alzheimer's disease. Where Ryan and Odin claim that *Califia* is a story about remembering and regaining, Guertin claims it is a matter of forgetting and loss. The interpretive disagreement results directly from differing conceptions of how the reader can (and cannot) go about reading the text as narrative.

Although I do not embrace Guertin's final conclusion, her interpretation emphasizes an aspect of the reading process that Ryan and Odin elide. While the reader can certainly reconstitute from *Califia* a clearer story than Guertin suggests, the wholeness of that story, the coherence of characters, events, and chronology, is the direct result of the reader's story-blending activity. If this ongoing process changes drastically in the course of any reading, then the interpretive disagreement raises two distinct but related questions about *Califia*'s story. First, how do the stories of the narrative present relate to the array of historical information it uncovers and (re)presents? The narrators' account of the search presents them as following clues and taking action, and yet, at the same time, the narrative background that comes with the clues seems to make their final success or failure irrelevant. Secondly, what kind of relationship does the text allow the reader to create with such contents? An initial screen addresses the reader directly, instructing him or her to join the treasure-hunt by examining the archive, but in so doing the reader finds him- or herself reading stories, rather than sleuthing.

Recognizing this shift in stance, Marie-Laure Ryan calls *Califia* a "fake game," a novel pretending to be a puzzle, while José-Luis Orihuela calls the treasure-hunt for the lost Califia gold "a species of MacGuffin used to motivate the reader and encourage him to explore the history of California across five generations of Angelinos" ("El narrador" para 53, my

translation).[7] Both portray *Califia* as proposing a treasure-hunt schema but then abandoning it in favor of a straightforward story; it is a closed work that calls itself open. I argue that the apparent "closure" actually creates the same kind of complicated cognitive situation as the other texts discussed thus far. Set against a macro-level historical narrative of loss, the narrators' treasure-hunt becomes a trivial exercise whose outcome simply does not matter. However, as Ryan and Odin suggest, the narrators do recover objects and stories of personal significance, discoveries significant enough at the micro-level to leave them satisfied. The treasure-hunt's failure or success—and the subsequent conception of individual activity set against historical process—depends in *Califia* on the kind of story-world blend the reader uses to make sense of the text. I therefore argue that, in recognizing these alternate blends, the reader can see his or her own reading experience as undergoing *the same* process of disillusionment—and re-enchantment—as the narrators undergo in the course of their investigations. The present chapter will proceed through the sequence of story blends in the following order:

I. The direct-story blends that the reader produces from the various textual and graphical elements (the stories of Augusta, Calvin, Kaye, et al), and the combined-story blend that produces the sense of a shared story-world, allowing the reader to anticipate influencing the story's outcome (I call this blend the "Treasure Hunt").

II. The alternate combined-story blend that reconfigures the shared story-world as a

[7] Orihuela's original text reads: "La novela se organiza narrativamente bajo la premisa de una búsqueda del tesoro virtual, una especie de MacGuffin utilizado para motivar al lector y alentarle a explorar la historia de California a través de cinco generaciones de angelinos." He follows filmic terminology coined by Alfred Hitchock: In a suspense film, the MacGuffin is a vital mystery, an initial motivating object (or goal) that incites the protagonist's investigation, but is later eclipsed by the characters' development or decisions—for example, the microfilm in *North by Northwest*, or the stolen cash in *Psycho*.

story of family history rather than a treasure-hunt activity, shutting the reader out of active participation (I call this the "Discovery of Loss" blend)

III. The second-order combined-story blend by which the reader integrates both combined-story blends with a sense of the reader's changing role in the novel, producing a sense of the reader's activity and the narrators' search as *both* open to further meaningful action, *and* closed down by what is already written and done.

Combined-Story Blend: The Treasure Hunt

The sense that the reader has a role to play in a treasure hunt is the result of a complex combined-story blend—the same blend, in fact, that produces the sense that there are three distinct narrators and a large cast of other major characters who all share the same story-world. This "Treasure Hunt" blend presumes four distinct temporal phases: the accumulating historical backstory takes up an "imperfect tense" role, pre-existing everyone's activity; the narrators' activities (up to and including their narration) take up a "preterite" role as a recent first interpretation; and the reader's encounter with *Califia* occupies a "present" role as ongoing interpretive action. Finally, according to the narrators, the reader has to finish the job, using the archive to discover the treasure. This proposed futurity encourages the reader to follow the narrators' example and treat everything instrumentally, as clues. Elaborating this blend, the reader will have to scour *Califia*'s sizeable tracts of text, maps, and other graphical and hypertextual elements for evidence. This very activity, however, will realign the blending process (gradually for some readers, suddenly for others), allowing the accumulating material to twist free of instrumental use and take on an increasingly coherent logic, "closing" the story to

the reader's intervention.

After the initial introductory screens, *Califia*'s first section, the "Roadhead," presents a "Letter to the Reader" signed by the three narrators, which explains that the archive is also a request for "assistance in discovering a cache of gold" (Roadhead 6).[8] Having sketched the first rudiments of the treasure-hunt story, a subsequent screen addresses the reader:

> This project is intended to be a virtual treasure map—we hope you will follow the trails in any manner you please [. . .] There are as many ways to explore as there are seekers. [. . .] Our hope is that, as you choose your way among the paths, you will discover more than we know. In the end, your created stories will determine the real location of the Treasure of Califia. (9)

These words join the preceding introductory screens in encouraging the reader to see his or her incipient reading experience as a delicate balance between different activities. The text rewards consideration as story, insofar as Augusta, Calvin, and Kaye recount a series of events that include the original discovery and loss of the "Treasure of Califia," as well as their own activity to date. At the same time, however, the letter presents the story as incomplete, as an archive of assembled materials that await the reader's further work. In accepting this treasure-hunt frame, the reader alters the generic space that governs the story-blend, from a mere sense of "somebody telling somebody else what happened"[9] to a sense that "somebody tells somebody else what happened *in order to provide* clues for a treasure hunt."

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[8] *Califia* includes information on each screen that can identify that unique place in the text. In this chapter I will cite quotations by providing the section (Roadhead, South, East, North, West, and a few others), a sub-section, if available (e.g. Augusta, or for the others, Family Myth, Docudrama, etc.), and finally, the screen's unique identifier. In Augusta's "path," each screen has a name, such as "Terrace 2." In Calvin's and Kaye's paths, and in other elements, each screen has a number.

[9] Again, I follow the very broad definition of a narrative frame used by Phelan (7), or Kayser (see Jannidis 40).

Just as the autodiegetic narration makes the narrator and his or her narrative choices a part of the story-world, the direct address of the "you" pronoun also produces an addressee, in this case a person reading a website, whose role the reader may or may not see herself as filling. Here, the letter's diction also combines with a recurring graphical contrivance—an image of blue footprints on various screens, which also frequently serves as a link (see Figure 37)—to suggest the cognitive schema for walking along a path, and also, simultaneously, a multiplicity of possible paths to be walked, a metaphor common in hypertext fiction.[10] However, by presenting the text as "a virtual treasure map," *Califia* ventures beyond previous hypertexts, in that this cognitive frame implies the existence of story-world terrain that may (or may not) correspond to the map. Indeed, *Califia* seems to anticipate precisely the blending-model of narrative reading,

Figure 37. The second screen of *Califia* (Roadhead, The Island, 2)

[10] Although I will work under the assumption that the "treasure-hunt" schema governs the reader's early engagement with the text, experienced readers may already suspect that *Califia* will not actually turn out differently depending on their activity. They may begin to construct the next blend, "Discovery of Loss" quite quickly.

wherein the text, read as narrative, can prompt for more than one story-world.

Insofar as it governs what the narrators say they are doing, the "treasure-hunt" frame allows the reader to combine the variety of texts in *Califia* into a coherent story-world, and to conceive of the "reader/addressee character" as able to intervene. All of the four major parts—the text calls them "journeys"—are divided into three "paths," and some of these paths have multiple pieces. Augusta's path is an episodic journal that moves from one screen to the next in a linear sequence, but Kaye's and Calvin's paths each include multiple narrative elements, divided into categories that reappear in each of the four journeys. Calvin's path presents a webpage menu, which includes links to a narrative journal much like Augusta's (only much shorter),[11] but also to documents by other people, including journals, logs, letters, and legal forms, as well as stories gleaned from these documents. Kaye's path also presents a menu, a star chart of the Big Dipper wherein each star is a link to a story (a legend or "family myth") or a non-narrative account (e.g. a star chart, a "geological certainty," or a map-reading technique). She claims to have gleaned these stories and facts not only from Calvin's documents, but also from inherited wisdom and encounters with the spirits of the dead. Finally, Calvin also compiles these elements into an electronic archive, organizing the paths into journeys, and the journeys into the Solar Table. As the reader reads each fragment for story, the text produces a nested array of narrative levels (see Figure 38).

[11] This is "Calvin's Back Yard," and the text within usually situates Calvin's narration (his "I-now" as narrator) at a temporal moment *after* the events chronicled in Augusta's memoir. His path also provides several different kinds of index; for example, "Clues" connect to suggestive elements related to the treasure-hunt, and "themes" collects recurring tropes, such as "paradise."

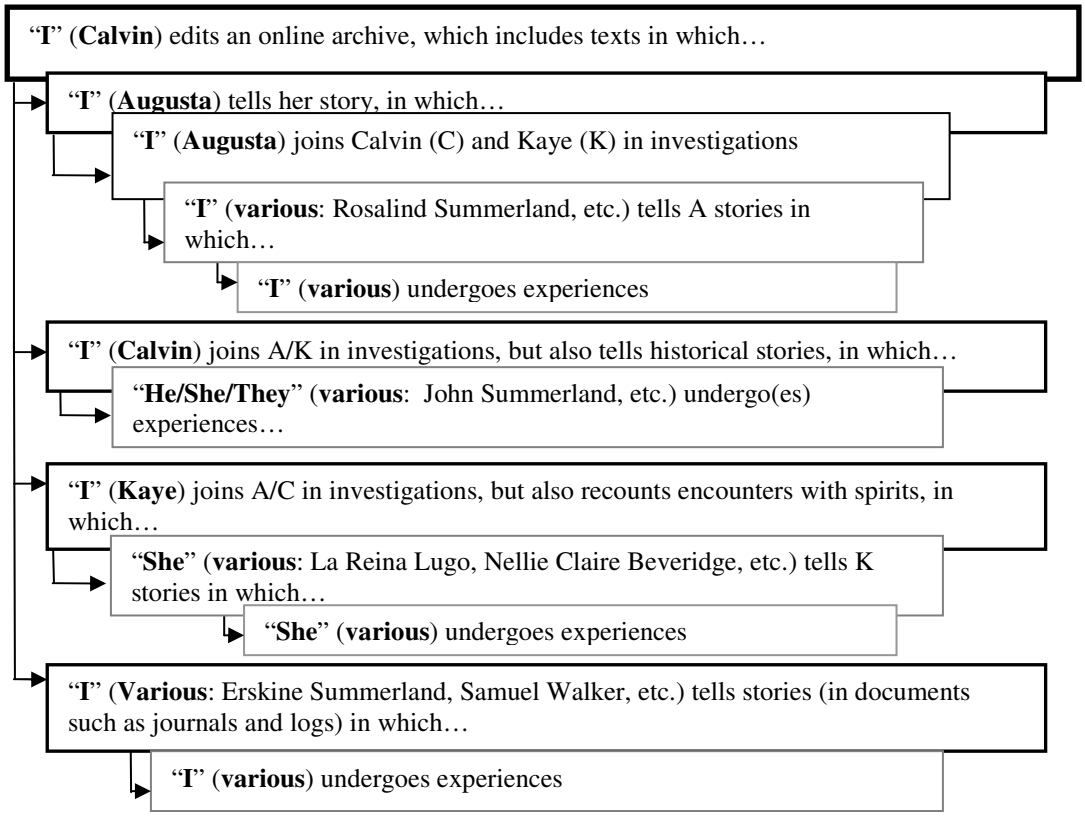

Figure 38. Narrative levels in *Califia*

Early in the reading process the transient text (the series of screens appearing in the same browser-interface) and the multiplicity of potential paths can seem daunting, in spite of a tutorial section explaining how to navigate the archive. For example, a screen in Augusta's account, in the "Journey South," describes finding a historical document, her ancestor Pretinella Walker's journal (see Figure 39). The screen offers at least three different ways to continue reading. One button, labeled "WindPower," allows the reader to continue reading Augusta's discourse, filling the browser-window with a new screen mostly full of text (see Fig. 5.7). A second button (and also a link highlighted in red, out of view in Figure 39) fills the *Califia* browser-window with a different screen, allowing the reader to read the journal that Augusta discovered (see Figure 40).

Furthermore, sections of text surrounded by rectangular boxes open separate windows

that provide information on the character or place mentioned (see the example in Figure 41, which links from the name "George Summerland" in Figure 39). These last, it turns out, merely disappear when clicked, but the choice between the journal and Augusta's story is an important one, for the journal does not link back to Augusta's story immediately, and yet the next screen of Augusta's story seems to assume that the reader has read the journal. Either way, the reader has to read on ahead with the clear knowledge that she has skipped something, and will have to return later, using the menus (the "Convergence" or the "Lookout") at each end of each "path" through the "Journey South."

To make sense of the multiplicity of direct-story blends, not to mention the complex website-like interface, the reader has to use the treasure- hunt schema to carry out a three-input "mirror" combined-story blend. This blend, which I call "Treasure-Hunt," aligns the various

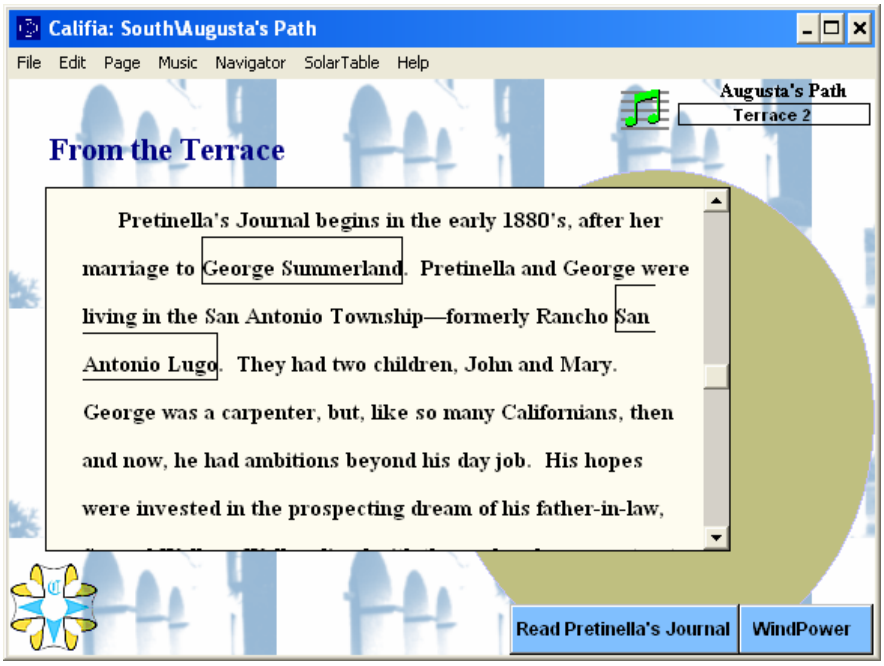

Figure 39. Forks in the path (South, Augusta, Terrace 2)

Figure 40. Pretinella's Journal (South, Docudrama: Pretinella's Journal, 97)

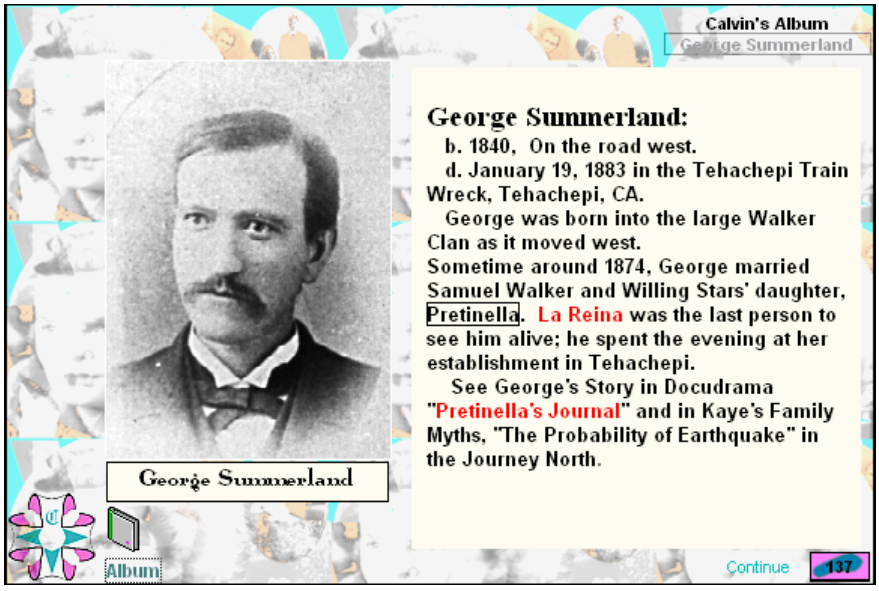

Figure 41. George Summerland's brief biography (South, Album: Seekers, 137)

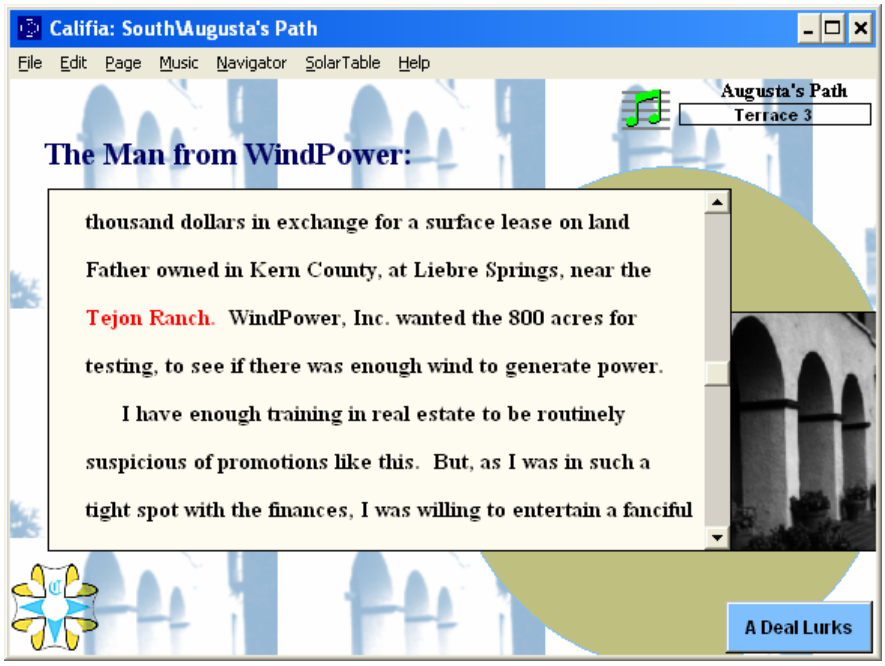

Figure 42. Augusta's next screen (South, Augusta, Terrace 3)

narrators' stories (each itself actually a direct- story blend) according to the treasure-hunt schema, and integrates them into a combined-story whole. Ryan and Odin come to such different conclusions from Guertin's because the combined blend originates in the clearer analogies and cross-references among the direct-stories of Augusta, Kaye, and Calvin, and allows the reader to integrate all the various materials on the basis of the combined-story blend that is their story-world—but it thereby also makes the subsidiary stories less distinct. It is often difficult to remember, as Guertin suggests, where exactly a specific piece of information about a specific character came from. The integration process only works because the threefold narration does not create the kinds of earth-shaking contradictions that so bedevil *Pale Fire*, *Half Life*, or *Only Revolutions*.

As each narrator refers to him- or herself and to others, the reader groups the pronouns and names, producing their blended "character" roles. Augusta's narrative relates her immediate

concerns (as I-then), as she at first attempts to locate her father Jack Summerland's rainy-day stash of gold coins, and then has to decide whether or not to sell Jack's single remaining property to a shady businessman, before finally embarking on the search for the Califia stash. Her screens tend to have a bluish tint, and their backgrounds tend to be populated by graphical elements drawn from the setting she happens to be narrating (the "terrace" elements visible in Figure 39 and Figure 42). Kaye's and Calvin's paths tell some of their own stories, but mostly focus on events from the deeper past, delving into the family histories to help Augusta. In the course of the first Journey, for instance, the reader learns that Augusta lacks Kaye's faith in the supernatural,[12] while Calvin is prepared to use what Kaye knows to improve his "docudramas."[13] Integrating the various cross-references between their accounts, the reader conducts the basic three-input combined-story blend, construing the three narrators as drawing upon a shared-story world to create their accounts (see Figure 43).

In turn, the disparate mentions or narrative artifacts of numerous other major characters have to be sorted out and blended with the reader's ongoing sense of who they are and how their experiences change the treasure-hunt. In the example above, graphical images directly assist the blending process. George Summerland's image (see Figure 41) reappears at least in part in many screens that relate aspects of his story. In the opening screens for Pretinella's Journal, his eyes peer out from a dense collage of images (see Figure 40), already suggesting to the reader that George will make an appearance within its pages. Such images reappear throughout (often

[12] Augusta remarks, "I admire the way [Kaye] makes meaning where there is none—it's one way of making a life" (South, WindPower 13).
[13] When the docudramas are not simply transcribed documents, they are "speculative reconstructions," accounts created when Kaye "'lays hands' on" archival materials "and interprets them" (South, Calvin's Message, 86).

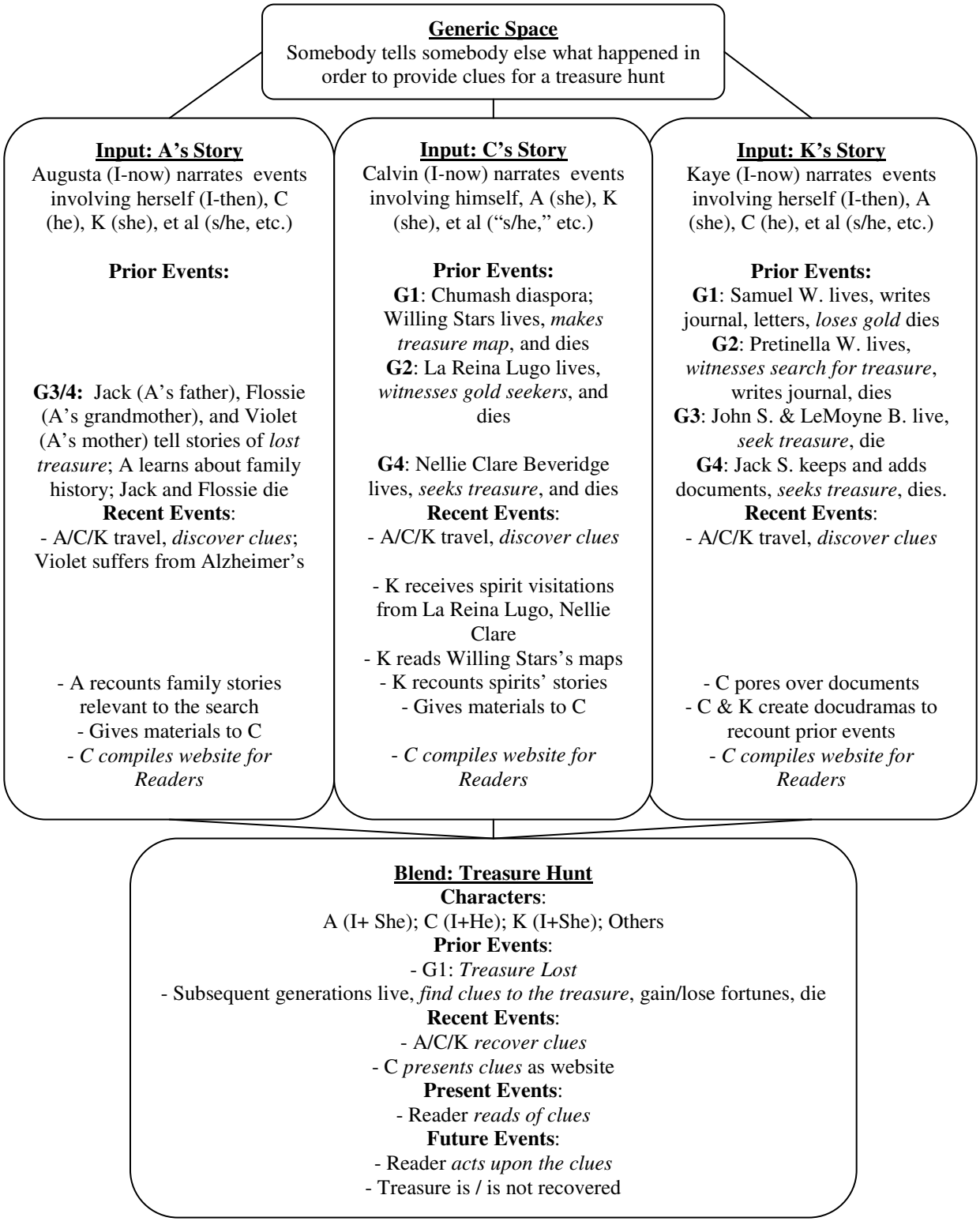

Figure 43. "Combined-story" blend for the Treasure Hunt story

digitally manipulated for further clarity),[14] and, as in the above example, names are also frequently links to "Calvin's Album," a list of dramatis personae (see again Figure 39 and Figure 41).[15] These repeated elements help the reader keep building blended conceptions of each character, providing an even more evocative visual cue than a name in printed text. In turn, the sense of such characters as points of reference, combined with the graphical contrivances of the screens themselves, also help the reader keep straight the different sections of the *Califia* archive, and the potential ways to navigate through it. In the above example, both the George Summerland bio (Figure 41) and the journal docudrama (Figure 40) are part of Calvin's section, and over time the stylistic cues begin to cohere with the reader's blended conception for "Calvin's style"—creating subtle indicators that a given link has jumped paths.[16]

By blending the disparate stories, the reader creates the story's historical depth, allowing her to work backward through various narrating acts to reconstruct the story-world events. This sense of historical depth allows the reader to adapt each sentence's linguistic materials (and graphical elements) to add detail to characters and events, but it also shows the reader how to incorporate the textual artifacts such as Pretinella's journal as themselves objects within the

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[14] Manipulations include photographic effects, cropping, coloring or lines, and in the case of LeMoyne Beveridge, a pencil-thin mustache that appears to have been added digitally (see e.g. East, Docudrama: The City Builders, 109). *Califia* also includes line-drawing clipart-style images, such as the picture of Bette Davis associated with Rosalind (e.g. East, Docudrama: Rosalind's Letter, 92). The clipart appears to be Calvin's signature contribution, for Augusta remarks, "I have requested that he not add unnecessary junk to my pages. He tends to get carried away" (Map Case, Augusta, 42).

[15] Kaye also divides the characters among five "generations," spanning a time period from 1849 to 1997. Calvin labels everyone associated with the Califia search a "Seeker" (a desperate gambler), a "Player" (a more careful dabbler in legends), or a "Keeper" (one who holds onto secrets rather than following clues or making risky power-plays).

[16] Guertin may still have a point, in that readers may not be patient enough to keep careful track of how all of the disparate story-pieces fit together. But *Califia* does go to great lengths to maintain an immersive experience by signaling how its links work, and how to get from one part of the text to another. For more on anti-immersive effects in other hypertexts, see Mangen's study on haptics and immersion; see also Evans and Po, who argue that users expect from digital literature an experience of "efferent" reading (for information) rather than "aesthetic" reading, for the enjoyment of the reading process itself (63, 71).

story-world. Augusta mentions finding it as a physical object in Jack's study (South, Augusta, Terrace 2; see Figure 39), and then the text offers a link to allow the reader to read the text it contains. Using to the combined-story blend, the reader reorganizes the story-world shared by all of these narrators, adding the journal as an object (an existent), but also all of the existents and events cued by its text, recreating not only the story Pretinella tells, but also the story of how it came before the reader's eyes. This process works backwards through events of transcription and narration toward story-world conclusions: the archive is created in 1998 by Calvin, who transcribes into its web-pages the contents of a journal that Augusta found in the recent past. In turn, Pretinella Walker wrote this journal as an account of events in which she participated, which happened over a period stretching from 1883 to 1895 (see South, Docudrama: Pretinella's Journal, 98-110).[17] She learned that George Summerland, her husband, died in the Great Tehachapi Train Wreck—perhaps because he knew something about the Califia gold.

The reader can gradually sort these events out, thanks to the graphical cues and the Treasure Hunt blend's historical depth, producing a multiply-mediated story-world. For the sake of clarity, I illustrate the results of this blend, in the story's mediation, as a series of "epistemic paths" that follow story-world information back through its multiple emplotments to the events themselves (see Figure 44) The complex exchange of documents and deductions sketched above produces the global insight that *Augusta's great-grandfather* may have been murdered because he knew something about the Califia gold, and that her great-grandmother carefully kept the

[17] Other elements are even more complex, as in the case of Erskine's plane crash. Calvin includes one account of it in a Docudrama that presents a copy of a letter sent to Augusta's father Jack by her aunt Rosalind. Here, the reader has to sort out multiple interactions between story levels: Calvin transcribes (in 1998), a letter written by Rosalind (in 1953), about hearing from Tibby Lugo (perhaps sometime in the 1940s) that Erskine was *shot down* (in 1931; see East, Docudrama: Rosalind's Letter, 95).

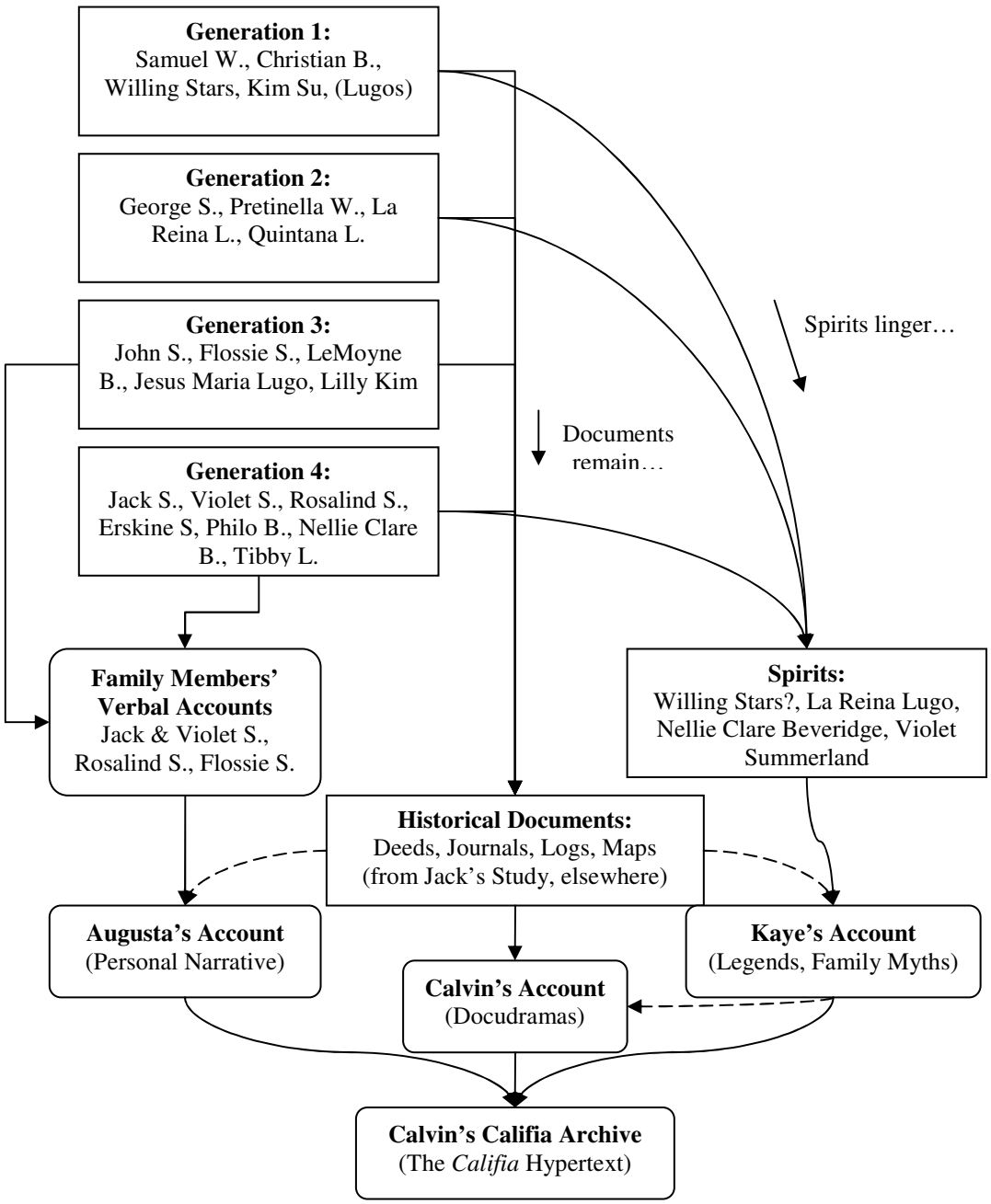

Figure 44. Epistemic paths in *Califia*

secret. This pattern repeats over and over again, as subsequent generations of Summerlands become enchanted with the idea of great wealth—and suffer for it. The "future events" in the treasure-hunt schema encourage the reader to treat such insights instrumentally, as potential clues. So long as the reader treats this "futurity" seriously, *Califia* seems available for interpretation along the lines of the "classical" studies of hypertext fiction, by presenting its "story" as an open-ended series of events. This approach treats all hypertexts this way, claiming that, simply by conferring choices about textual navigation on the reader, hypertext fiction makes the reader a participant in the emplotment process, organizing material as a narrator would.

The farther the reader ventures into the text, however, the more coherent the entire story becomes. The varied direct-story blends do encourage the skepticism one might feel when faced with a conspiracy theory, but subsequent revelations tend to allay rather than heighten such doubts, reinforcing the story of the treasure hunt, but also further closing it to meaningful intervention. Such is the case with the story about George Summerland's purported murder over clues to the Califia gold,[18] and textual details also confirm the story about a treasure map encoded in a government-issue blue blanket by Samuel Walker's Chumash wife, Willing Stars (also Augusta's great-great-grandmother)—a story first mentioned in an oblique reference to Walker's letters (see the red-letter link in Figure 42). Willing Stars's story spans the entire text, beginning with Walker's account of her rescue from slavery (South, Docudrama: The Tejon Letters, 117-20), and concluding with Kaye's recovery and interpretation of the blue blanket (West, Legends: Reading the Blue Blanket). A third family tale claims that Augusta's father,

[18] Kaye returns, many a document and discovery later, to retell a dream-vision of the events (North, Family Myth: Probabilty of Earthquake, 107), a simple heterodiegetic account of George's activities. Whether Kaye literally sees the actual events themselves, or simply re-envisions them on the basis of the intervening evidence, what she recounts matches the story prompted by the rest of the text.

Jack, lost an eye in a childhood accident, but investigations clarify that he was shot in a botched attempt to murder *his* father, John Summerland, who owned land that supposedly held the Califia gold.[19] The same pattern plays out in the story of John Summerland's disappearance and reappearance,[20] and the death of multiple characters in the Chinatown Fire.[21]

The weight of story-coherence does not contradict the Treasure Hunt blend in the way that some of Nora's later stories contradict her first memoir in *Half Life*, or in the simpler way that Sam and Hailey reverse each other's descriptions in *Only Revolutions*. The process here is more akin to the way *Erasure* encourages the reader to rework her sense of the narrator's reliability by reorganizing his relationship to the story-world. Rather than creating an alternate configuration of events and existents, the accumulating stories question the instrumental value attributed to them by the Treasure Hunt blend. Patterns emerge, but instead of riches lying in wait among the scorching slopes of the Tehachapis, these patterns conjure up shadowy antagonists, syndicates of rich men who have always tapped California's real treasures—gold, water, fertile land—and sucked them dry while the gold-prospectors and more scrupulous entrepreneurs barely scraped by, gained and lost fortunes, or died trying. This recurring story-formation pushes the reader to invert the relationship between the narrators' stories and the histories they reconstruct. Instead of mapping the historical materials to the narrators' shared treasure-hunt, construing the past stories instrumentally as clues, the reader has to map the

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[19] The reader has to assemble these story-world events from Rosalind's letter to Jack (East, Docudrama: Rosalind's Letter, 92-7), Augusta's descriptions of the letter (East, The Condolence Letter 1 and 2), an interview with Rosalind (North, North Point 1-4, North Point 8), and Calvin's account of Jack's legal documents (West, Docudrama: JackRabbit Jack Summerland, 85, 92-3).

[20] The narrators rebuild John's life-story out of the documents in his study, producing two docudramas (East, Docudrama: The City Builders 100-103; West, Docudrama: The City Lost), which the reader has to integrate with Augusta's account of an interview with Rosalind, who also describes him (North, North Point 3-4).

[21] Like the Tehachapi Train Wreck and the Milton Oil swindle, the Chinatown Fire is a real event inhabited by fictional characters (see Luesebrink para 4, para 13, para 15).

narrators' actions into the accumulating long-term history, reading out a different story from the same text—and dispossessing herself of the capacity to intervene. This last dispossession directly reverses the expectations of "classical" hypertext theory, and seems to confirm Ryan's sense that the text is actually more novel than puzzle.

Combined-Story Blend: The Discovery of Loss

As in *Erasure* and *Only Revolutions*, hints at an alternate blending method appear throughout the text of *Califia*, so the reader may begin what I call the "Discovery of Loss" blend at any point in her explorations. The new blend's composition and completion rely upon two distinct but related changes to the story-reading process. In one change, the narrators' treasure-hunting activity begins to seem foreclosed historically, in that the reader begins to recognize their current efforts as merely the latest iteration of a macro-scale story about doomed prospectors facing down corporate moneyed interests. At the same time, the story also begins to seem foreclosed *narratively*, in that Kaye's divinations and Calvin and Augusta's calculations produce results, eventually locating the Califia stash, now inaccessible underneath an old landslide. These realizations alter the combined-story blend's generic space, so that the sense of what all the texts share is no longer that of "someone providing someone else with clues for a treasure-hunt," but is rather "someone telling stories of loss." In addition to rendering "classical" hypertext theory's claims for readerly agency irrelevant from the start, this adjustment also changes how the novel's thematics and intertextual connections might be further interpreted.

In Augusta's memoir in the Journey West, the narrators finally meet with Kramer Milton

III, whose company, WindPower, wants to buy the land-use rights to Jack Summerland's last swathe of land. Milton scoffs at the narrators' discoveries, and explains that the Summerland property has never really mattered:

> it was owned by the rabbits, you know. On the fringe of things, scared of their shadows, scurrying around aimlessly, fond of playing hide-and-go-seek, and always, taking one, ill-timed dash across the highway. Men of substance play games with them, as rabbits like to be diverted. But in the end, they are just rabbits. (West, Augusta, WindPower Shows 3)

His arrogant summary is an apt fit for the "Discovery of Loss" combined-story blend. Regardless of the order in which the reader meets them, the four Journeys encourage her to create a coherent blended story-world much like the one Kramer Milton sketches: people like Milton have gone on making obscene profits, while five generations of Summerland, Beveridge, and Lugo treasure-hunters have "scurried around" with their maps and surmises. Augusta, Kaye, and Calvin are merely repeating the same fruitless search their ancestors began. Kramer Milton's allusive name hints at the cumulative effect of the textual prompts, for the narrators' story of recovered genealogy reveals a paradise long ago lost.

The gathering story-world coherence increasingly pressures the reader to conclude that, by the time the narrators begin their treasure-hunt, most of the major conflicts are already long over. From Samuel Walker's desperate letters to federal agents, the reader learns how the Rancho el Tejon, represented in *Califia* by characters such as Beale and Vineyard, destroyed the Chumash people in the 1840s through terrorism, land-seizure, and profiteering. Walker renders their villainy concrete in the poignant image of the Rancho's agents impounding blankets meant

as free federal aid, and selling them to the Chumash refugees for extortionate prices. George Summerland's story picks up here, for the same Beale and Vineyard extort mine locations from him before sending him to his death in the "Tehachepi Train Wreck." As Los Angeles rises from the desert, exclusive syndicates swindle Owens Valley residents out of their water and sell it to Angelinos;[22] men from these very syndicates start the Chinatown Fire that kills most of the Lugos, and also sink John Summerland's fortune in the Milton Oil swindle (perpetrated by none other than Kramer Milton I). In each case, the reader has to rebuild the story from a disparate array of documents, but the stories all reinforce the same basic—and ominous—cognitive frame: the "rabbits" are free to act until they get in the way of the "men of substance."

This realization, in turn, cues the reader to align the narrators' story with that of their ancestors. Augusta finds her father's land already being mined, in an operation run by the Tejon Syndicate's subsidiary, "Comet Cement." She describes the Comet Cement mine in violent terms, seeing the hills "punched open, cratered" by "[h]uge, huge holes in the mountain, like the bites of a giant bear," wounds, then, that remake her conception of her father: "the sight of those pits in the mountain, *his mountain*, lets me know there was a struggle at the center of his life I did not know at all" (East, Augusta, Dipper Mines 4). Augusta's present endeavor begins to seem "the same as" the lost battles of the past, allowing the reader to complete the new single-scope "Discovery of Loss" blend by seeing the narrators and their ancestors as engaged in the same ultimately fruitless activity (see Figure 45). Instead of using past events instrumentally, the reader begins to see the treasure hunt as the latest iteration in a repetitive history. This framing-reversal remakes the reader's conception of the characters and their actions. In microcosm, the

[22] See Kaye's account (East, Geological Certainties: Water, 68).

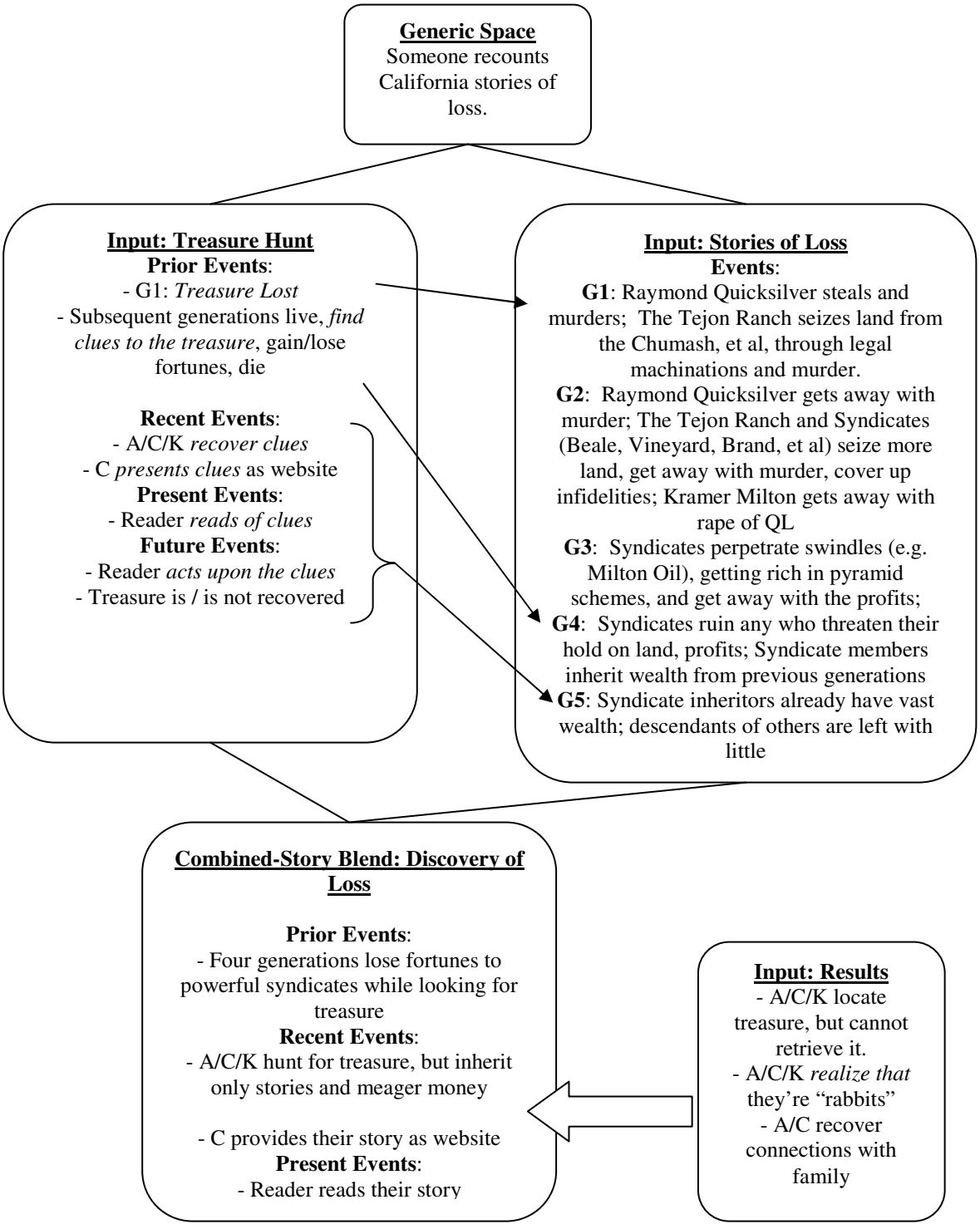

Figure 45. "Combined-story" blend for the Discovery of Loss story

treasure hunt can be successful, but in macrocosm it appears trivial. The analogy between Augusta digging in her father's back yard, and Comet Cement mining her father's "back yard" property contextualizes the treasure-hunt, mapping it onto a history of loss. Augusta herself recognizes this parallel after Milton gives the "rabbit" monologue:

> We have been here a long, long time. We've been unlucky, outsmarted, outright tricked, trapped, waylaid, and snuffed. The money and power syndicates have gone right on, throwing together a giant slum of a city, paving over every stretch of grass, bulldozing every canyon, sucking water from every river within a thousand miles, making a bizarre, artificial version of Paradise right on top of the real one. (West, Augusta WindPower Shows 3)

This version of the story undoes the invitation to a treasure hunt, not only in the sense that the syndicates won out long ago, but also in the sense that the story itself, the sequence of events recounted by *Califia*, is also over by the time the reader reads it.

Augusta's account of Milton's "rabbit" speech clarifies the *narrative* foreclosure of the treasure-hunt schema.[23] By this point, the narrators have found the material treasures they sought, and have recounted their discoveries, and even though the Califia stash remains out of reach, they seem to have found the landslide-remnants beneath which it must lie (see West, Augusta, Ernie's Skull 2-6). Everything the reader sees comes mediated by multiple degrees of textual organization and story-world emplotment, including Calvin's web design, Augusta's

[23] For readers who read the story in order, from South to East to North to West (an order Ryan rearranges—see Ryan 150), the blending process produces "Discovery of Loss" before Augusta recapitulates it, whereas for readers who get to West earlier, Milton's account of the "rabbits" structures the blending process this way immediately.

narration, and most importantly, Kaye's divination.[24] Their navigating skill produces results using maps that are otherwise uninformative within the story-world, as in Kaye's "Dipper Mine" map (see Figure 46). By recognizing that the narrators' work has left little to be done about the Califia stash, the reader closes him- or herself out of the treasure-hunt schema, reconceiving the "treasure-hunt" as simply a "story." No longer can he or she hope to follow the clues and produce an alternate conclusion. The Califia stash lies under a fallen mountain; corporate interests still control California's real wealth; and most importantly, the narrators have found what they were looking for.

The "Discovery of Loss" blend, therefore, allows readers to see *Califia* as a corrective to

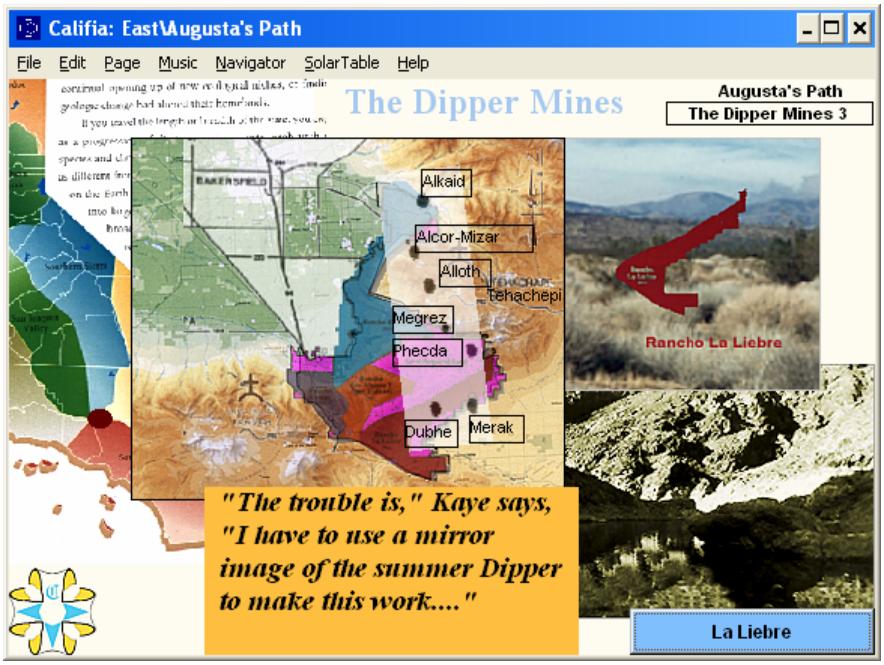

Figure 46. Difficult maps (East, Augusta, The Dipper Mines 3)

[24] E.g., Kaye knows how to apply maps of the Big Dipper to terrain, according to the shamanic practice of mapping stars not as seen by an ordinary human looking *up*, but in the inverted pattern that would be seen by the mystic looking *down*, from the stars' perspective (see East, The Dipper Mines 2, and also West, Legends: Indian String Figures, 108).

the practice of assuming that choices about navigation are also choices about composition and story-world order—a corrective that parallels the conclusions of the alternate strain of hypertext theory, begun by Aarseth in his 1997 monograph *Cybertext*, and re-confirmed by Ryan in her *Avatars of Story* in 2006. The act of navigation itself, the reading and interpreting of the "treasure map," becomes in the "Loss" blend a repetition of an event already completed before the reader reaches the text. This conclusion would suit further interpretations that treat *Califia* like a more straightforward, non-recursive narrative, one whose story-world remains clear and coherent enough, even if it might merit multiple thematic interpretations or intertextual relations.

But the text's final developments cause a profound aporia: On the one hand, the weight of history makes the current treasure-hunt pointless, a mere repetition of earlier losses. On the other, by the time they bid the reader farewell at the end of the Journey West, the narrators seem to have recovered something of individual value that allows them to change their personal stories, making the conflation and reduction of all stories to one foreclosed history (and thereby, the blending process so involved) a mistake.[25] Augusta comes to her most depressing realizations *within* the archive's text, just before she and Calvin undergo what seem to be redemptive experiences, recasting—again—their present-day search. In the Journey North Calvin discovers that the parents he never knew were none other than Nellie Clare Beveridge and Tibby Lugo (see North, Augusta, North Point 2), regaining his surname and revising his sense of himself. In the Journey West, with Kaye's semi-magical guidance, he has a computer-based conversation with Nellie Clare's spirit (see West, Family Myth: The Séance with Nellie Clare, 118-25). Likewise, Augusta's story ends with an unusual series of observations:

[25] This is where the allusion to *Paradise Lost* deserves far more attention than I have space to give it here. I see that text as providing the intertextual cognitive schema, if you will, for the "Discovery of Loss" blend, given its endeavor to found both despair and hope in the ur-narrative of a Biblical primal scene.

> I did not expect that Calvin would suggest to Kaye that she move in with him. I did not expect that Kaye would mention the words adopting a baby.
>
> I did not expect to see Mother's footsteps forming in the sand and walking into the surf. I did not expect to understand the way the spirit of the past is always with us. (West, Augusta, Spirit Footsteps 2)

These somewhat saccharine lines cue several important adjustments to the "Discovery of Loss" blend. The strange subjunctive negation, "I did not expect" poses and contradicts precisely the expectations of the combined-story blend, by which the reader understands the narrators' present activity as irrelevant and marginal.[26] The final sentence juxtaposes the story of loss with a sense that precisely *this* story has been regained (see the third "Input" in Figure 45). It allows the reader to reinstate the treasure-hunt schema, but substitutes for the original goal of finding the Califia gold recovery of the lost story of the exploited.

Augusta's sentimental words do more than declare the "treasure" to be the knowledge and spiritual connections that she here rediscovers: they also have the potential to remake the entire story-blending process. Augusta's account of the footsteps prompts the reader to recognize Violet's "spirit footprints" as precisely the simple graphical image that has appeared throughout *Califia*, beginning on the earliest screens (see again Figure 37). There, with a soft flamenco guitar soundtrack, the reader gazes upon an image of the surf, with a superimposed graphic depicting eight footsteps, pointed inland, with the prompt, "Come ashore" (Roadhead, The Island, 2)—a graphical link that appears throughout *Califia*, often with the caption "Follow me." In the Journey West, the first of the "Spirit Footprints" pages contains the exact

[26] The information also incidentally makes Calvin and Kaye estranged first cousins, and therefore vulnerable to the incest taboo (see South, Kaye's Home Page, 28), a taboo they later cheerfully break (North, North Point 2).

photographic negative of the sea image from the novel's first screen, with the same eight footprints, this time pointed out to sea (see Figure 47). The footprint motif depicts *Violet's* footprints, which only appear for Augusta at the end of her present narrative (as I-now). The reader has to position the "Roadhead" section not at the *beginning* of the narrators' story, but at the *end*, at the point when Calvin and the others turn the search over to the reader.

The first "letter to the reader," and the subsequent introductory screen which first prompts the reader to create the Treasure-Hunt blend, appear in the Roadhead too. Their words must take on a new meaning, now that the reader has assembled and re-assembled the story: "Our hope is that, as you choose your way among the paths, you will discover more than we know. In the end, your created stories will determine the real location of the Treasure of Califia" (Roadhead, Join Us, 9). Encountered before the Journey West, the words seem to equate "treasure" with physical gold, and "created stories" with treasure-hunting activities or hypertext

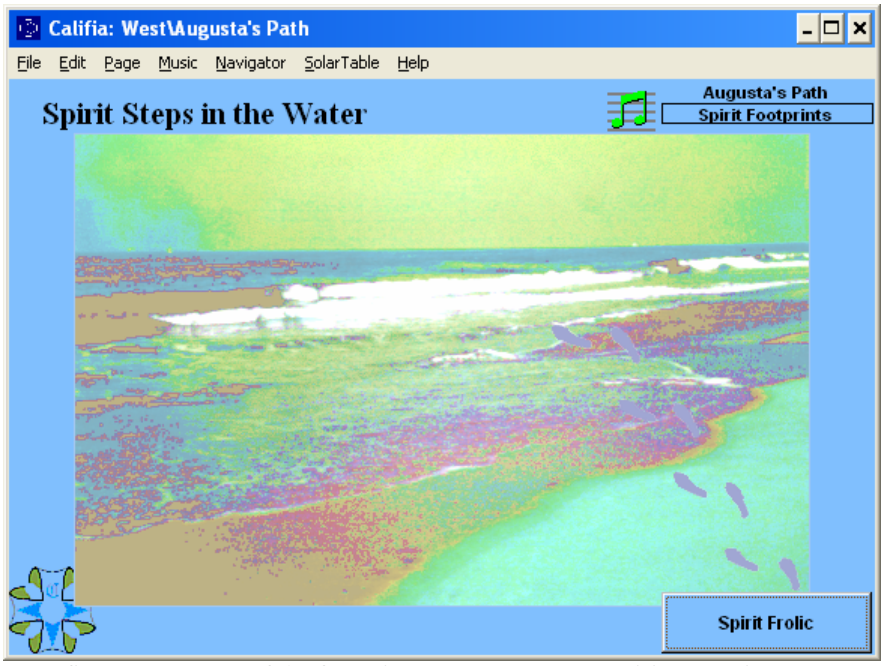

Figure 47. The last (or first) appearance of the footprints (West, Augusta, Spirit Footprints)

navigation. Now, however, the treasure seems to be the lost stories, and the activity that finds the treasure is precisely the blending process that reconstitutes the stories from the text. The generic space thus shifts again, reinstating a treasure-hunt with a different goal; it might be summarized as "Someone seeks lost stories." In some important sense, then, the reader has been undergoing "the same" process as the treasure-seeking narrators—and this kind of "sameness" prompts for one final blend.

Second-Order Combined-Story Blend: The Story-Hunt

In composing what I call the "Story-Hunt" blend, the reader aligns the changes to the reconstructed "reader/addressee" role with the changes undergone by the narrators in the course of their journeys. Theirs is a process of what might be called enchantment, disillusionment, and re-enchantment.[27] Within the Treasure Hunt blend, the story-world appears open-ended, and "enchants" both the narrators' and the reader's activities by imbuing them with the futurity of eventual success or failure. Within the Discovery of Loss blend, however, the story-world appears enclosed, creating a "disillusionment" that operates not simply by removing the (narrators' and reader's) goal, but by revising the blended story-world so that the goal was an illusion all along. This blend becomes problematic once more, however, insofar as the narrators seem to reinstate the "treasure-hunt" schema with a different goal, namely to resuscitate a

[27] This sequence alludes as briefly as possible to Fredric Jameson's theories of utopian science fiction in *Archaeologies of the Future*; to the notion of "enchantment" in Charles Bernstein's work on Adorno's ethical theory; and to Carla Benedetti's discussion of the "search for grace" as articulating a "longing to relegitimize a poetic practice, to reenchant it" (182). All of these can usefully illuminate the story-world shifts that *Califia* encourages the reader to enact, particularly if *Califia* reinscribes Jameson's or Adorno's metanarratives about modernity, but the extended comparisons would send the present study too far afield.

marginalized version of California history.

These alignments allow the reader to compose a blend that makes her own experiences "the same as" those of Augusta, Kaye, and Calvin, and thereby to re-envision the final phase, the re-enchantment whereby the three narrators reinstate the treasure-hunt frame as a metaphor for their historical-revisionist (and self-revisionist) project, rather than as a physical quest. Completing the blend, the reader can integrate the narrators' cognitive-mapping activity in California with her own cognitive-mapping activity in *Califia*, producing a blended treasure-hunt schema involving roles for a "seeker," a "map," a "landscape," and a "treasure." The "map" integrates the narrators' historical documents with the reader's *Califia* text, and the "landscape" combines the narrators' material California landscape and present-day endeavors with the reader's reconstructed conception of the full story-world history. The final blended story-world allows the reader to reinstate, as "treasure," a story formerly erased, and now recovered. In the second-order combined-story blend, this recovery is a blended activity that combines the narrators' archival research with the reader's navigation of *Califia*. I therefore call this account of *Califia* the "Story Hunt" blend (See Figure 48).

This blend superficially resembles the interpretation advanced by Ryan and Odin, in that it recasts repressed history as the "treasure," but with the important caveat that the reader's activity reiterates the narrators' experiences, and therefore renders what seems a closed story in Ryan's and Odin's accounts simultaneously open. In the "Story Hunt" blend, archival navigation modifies the reader's sense of the "seeker's" role by enchanting, disenchanting, and re-enchanting the reading activity itself. In turn, the revised sense of the addressee-as-seeker

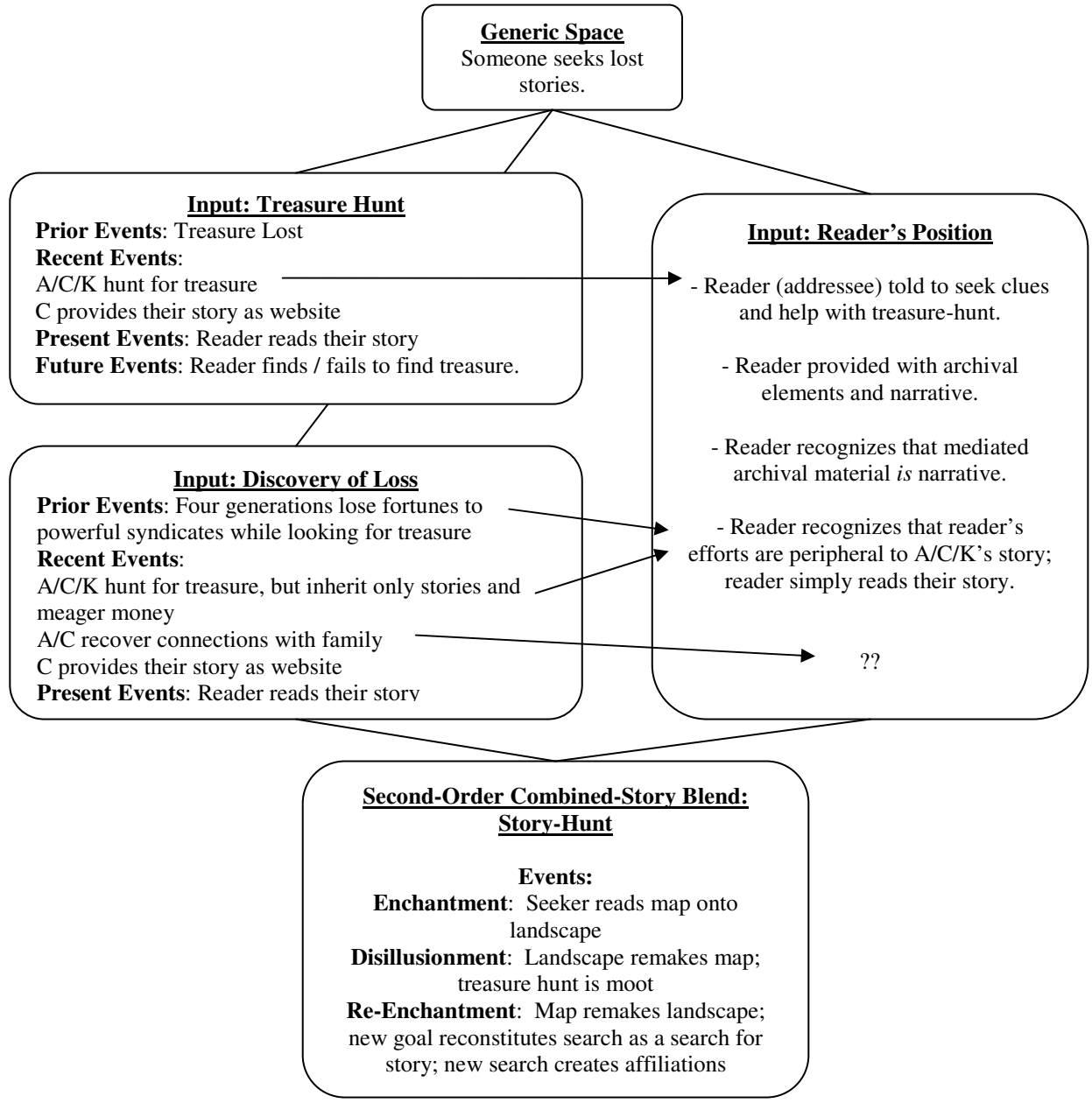

Figure 48. "Second-order combined-story" blend for the Story Hunt

allows the reader to revise the "landscape" being read, remaking the historical story. For the narrators, this remaking takes the form of a cognitive schema for "affiliation," epitomized in Augusta's monologue: she finally refers to the family history in the plural first person, asserting, "*We* have been here a long time." Read according to the "Story Hunt" blend, the statement includes the addressee as well, numbering her among those "outright tricked, trapped, waylaid." But if the reader's experience matches the addressee's role in this "disillusionment" phase, as somehow tricked by the text (and Orihuela's comment about the "MacGuffin" already suggests that it does), then the "Story Hunt" blend suggests that the reader can also suit herself to the addressee's re-enchantment, the revision of self and history epitomized in Augusta's later statement in the first-person plural: "I did not expect to understand the way the spirit of the past is always with us." Read this way, *Califia* asks the reader to accept an addressee role conceived not as a navigator of texts, but a re-maker of history—i.e., the text asks the reader to reject Kramer Milton's dichotomy between "men of substance," and "rabbits," and to number herself among the history-restoring characters (seekers and keepers, in Calvin's terms) whose stories the reader reconstitutes.

Augusta, Kaye, and Calvin remake their sense of themselves and of California's history, but only with the help of several kinds of "spirit guide." Each of the story-blends reinforces these guides' reality: Kaye is no hokey spiritualist, for her intuitions and reconstructions lead to results that reinforce her image of the story-world. Likewise, Augusta's ailing mother offers enigmatic clues that turn out to corroborate Kaye's dipper-map calculations and, finally, Jack's lost letter to Augusta, indicating his own identical conclusions about the Califia treasure's whereabouts (see West, Docudrama: JackRabbit Jack, 91-3). Their collective efforts allow them

to offer an interpretation of a key mapping device, namely the blue blanket purchased at an extortionate price from the Tejon Mission by the Chumash, and reworked as a record of their heritage by Willing Stars, Augusta's ancestor. What the blue footprints throughout *Califia* signify, read according to the Story Hunt blend, is that the three narrators perform the same enigmatic function for the reader as their "spirit guides" perform for them. Instead of crossing *spiritual* boundaries to guide the seeker, however, they cross the *ontological* barrier separating the tale told from the addressee. The recovered story of exploited ancestors includes fictional characters, but embeds them in situations culled directly from factual historical narratives. The story about "what happened to the exploited characters" opens itself to further extra-textual investigation, giving the reader an open-ended addressee role to adopt as her own (or at least, one amenable to being adopted). *Califia* is thus just as "closed and open" as the maps that inhabit its screens: its determinate form fits a determinate landscape in discernable ways, but the map-reading remakes map and landscape in an ongoing process of self-revision.

Conclusion

Califia is, finally, a unique and peculiar example of what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction": it revises historical narratives, but also depicts the revision process itself. The narratable sequence of enchantment, disillusionment, and re-enchantment is as much a schema of revisionist historical practice as it is a story about the reading process. The final Story Hunt blend therefore has two important consequences for future interpretive work on *Califia*. First, the Story Hunt blend allows a critical analysis to both reject and accept the much-

debated "interactivity" posited in hypertext fiction and criticism. The blend allows the reader a meaningful role in the story-world, but only a role that approximates the same kind of "active witnessing" as I have developed in my work on *Half Life*, *Only Revolutions*, and *Erasure*—all print novels. The Story Hunt also integrates the theories of reader-activity that underlie both the "closed" accounts of Odin and Ryan (with their assumption of a fixed textual architecture), and Guertin's "open" account (with her assumption of readerly limitations in apprehending textual architectonics). The story-world blend coheres, but does so in a sequence of increasingly complex ways *because* it is a blend that combines a seething multitude of more limited stories, whose interrelationships are always open to revision. The novel's title itself signifies its revisionist purpose, for it implies a folk etymology that would connect the state's name, California, to the myth of an island governed by an Amazon queen.[28]

Secondly, the Story Hunt blend opens *Califia* to an extremely complicated variety of thematic and intertextual interpretations. The second-order combined-story blend creates an example of what Paul Ricoeur calls "participatory belonging," the historiographic practice of using analogies among individual actions (rather than identities) to create large-scale composite historical entities.[29] Just as (following my modified version of Butler's and Hardcastle's accounts), self-narration individuates a self by way of its own inability to provide a complete

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[28] As Dora Beale Polk puts it, the search for the name's origin is "a scholarly exploration every bit as interesting in its own way as the story of the exploration of California itself" (123). Polk's book, one of Luesebrink's sources, contravenes today's common understanding (that the name derives from a Latin phrase meaning "hot furnace") in asserting that the name "California" does in fact derived from García Ordoñez de Montalvo's version of the legendary Amazon queen "Calafia" (125). Like the intertextual connection to *Paradise Lost*, this reference to *Las Sergas de Esplandián*, made explicit in *Califia*'s pages (South, Legends: Amazon Queen, 39) deserves further future attention.

[29] See Ricoeur's discussion of the theories of Weber, Aron, and Mandelbaum, wherein he embraces participatory belonging as a practice of creating "quasi-characters" (1: 194) as supra-individual individuals (197), and yet still holds the line against determinism (201).

account of that self,[30] large-scale stories about composite group-level behavior emerge as an un-completable process, precisely insofar as they still refer to individual-level activity. The Story Hunt blend accepts both the (macro-level) historical legibility conferred by Kramer Milton's "rabbit" monologue *and* the capacity of retained (individual, micro-level) knowledge to revise historical narratives. In this respect, *Califia* combines the sense of dialectical self-narration illustrated in *Half Life* with the (perhaps dialogic) self-allegorization by which self-narrators suit their accounts of themselves to story-schemas in *Only Revolutions* and *Erasure*. As an example (and not just an account) of a *kind* of revisionist process, *Califia* presents itself as a cognitive-mapping project (albeit one not necessarily carried out in Jameson's terms), demonstrating a sense of self-in-world that tries to be both adequate and aware of its inadequacy. Further research should be able to use this sense of a mapping-project to produce a clearer understanding of the intertextual relationships to *Paradise Lost*,[31] to the legends and lost histories from Luesebrink's Native American source materials,[32] and to historiographic texts that provide disparate versions of California's history.[33]

Whereas theories of hypertext fiction distinguish between non-interactive and interactive texts by the flexibility of their material underpinnings (their user-function, in Aarseth's terms, or what Ryan might see as their openness to intervention), the present analysis has demonstrated

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[30] See Butler's discussion of Cavarero (33-7).

[31] In addition to the many Milton references, Kaye and Calvin also call Calvin's map of the *Califia* text itself "a Cabala" (Map Case, Topological Maps: Calvin's Dance, 38-40), on account of its representation of metaphoric path-selections.

[32] Much might be made, for instance, of the relationship between *Califia*'s mapping project and the traces of correspondences between constellations, collective Native American stories, string-figures, and restorative shamanic practices that invoke these elements. These relationships might put *Califia* in an interesting dialogue with, for instance, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, Diane Glancy's *Pushing the Bear*, or Tomson Highway's dualogy of coyote-plays.

[33] Readers born and raised in California, having built models of Father Serra's missions in fourth grade, will probably have a particularly visceral experience of *Califia*'s call to affiliation and revisionist history.

how to discern a vibrant interactivity produced by static texts through their story-world flexibility—i.e., by virtue of the distinctive cognitive activity they encourage when read for story. Here, the text invites the reader to reconfigure the story-world over and over, until she produces an addressee-role that has enough agency to revise—not the *text*, but its *context*.

Conclusion

> "[W]e demand rigidly defined areas of doubt and uncertainty!"
>
> —Representatives of the Amalgamated Union of Philosophers, Sages, Luminaries, and Other Thinking Persons (Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* 172)

I have proposed the blending-model of narrative reading in order to prove the threefold hypotheses with which this dissertation began:

1.) Classical structuralist models of the story/discourse relationship need to be thoroughly revised to cope with experimental narrative forms such as the five texts considered here.

2.) A cognitive model of the narrative reading process, revised in keeping with theories of cognitive conceptual integration ("blending") can better describe how the four twenty-first-century novels provoke readers to create contradictory stories, but then integrate them, such that the resulting story-world accepts *both* one story's configuration *and* another's.

3.) These novels generate the "both/and" conclusion in order to address specifically twenty-first-century literary, critical, and folk-psychological concerns. They answer apparent aporias by highlighting how narrative form is both adequate and inadequate to representing the relations between self and world, preparing the reader to recognize this slippage elsewhere.

Unlike the representatives in Adams's novel, I do not aspire to rigidity, but I have undertaken

this project in the interest of being able to talk more precisely about the cognitive results of recursive, contradictory narrative texts. The core of this project is the description of a specific kind of contradiction and recursion that allows readers to pose and then work past the conclusion that a narrative's story world is indeterminate, and that allows readers thereby to recognize the indeterminacy itself as a part of a specific kind of relationship with the text. I might paraphrase Adams by demanding *dynamically* defined areas of uncertainty.

In Review

Chapter 1 has established the blending-model of narrative reading that allows a precise description of the cognitive form that causes readers to produce such divergent readings of *Pale Fire*. Each subsequent chapter has explored the blending-model's parameters and capabilities, working through the ramifications of the texts' formal properties by demonstrating how each novel creates its conceptual integration. Each text impels the reader to create seemingly opposed versions of the combined-story blend, an ambivalence epitomized in *Pale Fire* by the story-world quandary between John Shade's worldly perspective and Charles Kinbote's *other*worldly perspective. But each subsequent text creates wily story-world variations whose unresolvability becomes narratable as a specific kind of story-world activity. In producing the contradictory "combined-story" blends, the reader integrates large amounts of textual data, and recognizes that it coheres in more than one way. Just as differences among narrators' accounts can produce a "parallax" effect, allowing the reader to create a coherent combined-story blend by integrating analogies and disanalogies, carefully constrained differences in contradictory combined-story blends can also prompt the reader to carry out a second-order integration.

Each chapter has also supported the third hypothesis (the use of "both/and") by illustrating how the complex blending process at work in these four texts is inseparable from the understanding of the relations between self and world they each advance in their own way. Their textual and story-world form directly suit the kind of story-world participation they ask of the reader. Of the four novels considered here, those concerned primarily with the notion of a "self" create their multiple story-worlds by emphasizing their status as memoir. They ask the reader to revise her concept of a "self" to incorporate what might be called an "internal" otherness. On the basis of a succession of textual elements, the reader has to revise her story-world blend in *Half Life* and *Erasure* over and over again, until the tantalizing differences in potential story-worlds allow an integration. This second-order combined-story blend produces a conception of the text as a consequence of the narrators' efforts to accomplish something more than simply narration. The reader creates this "event"—an anamnesis or recovery from trauma; an initiation—as an event occurring within the story-world, but outside the narration. It is a *non-narrated* event that the reader has to recognize, and thereby create.

In *Half Life*, then, the reader recognizes Nora/Blanche as struggling with the ways in which the "I" pronoun (and its attendant folk-psychological baggage) does and does not suit (t)he(i)r experience, and finally coming to terms with the trauma this lack-of-fit has caused them. In *Erasure* the reader recognizes Monk as struggling with the ways in which racializing conceptions of "authorship" (of narrating agency) do and do not suit his lived experience as an author, but finally using his own recursive attempts to narrate to create, at last, some sense of belonging.

The other two texts, *Only Revolutions* and *Califia*, are more concerned with the

relationships between a self and a context, and therefore create their multiple story-worlds by presenting the reader with multiple narrators' accounts of events. These texts encourage the reader to integrate the narrators' accounts with a putatively objective "chronological" account (the "chronomosaics" in *Only Revolutions*, and the historical documents in *Califia*), revising both in the process until the interaction between self-narration and historical narration becomes—like the problematic attempts to produce a self in the previous two novels—a narratable event. In *Only Revolutions*, the reader recognizes Sam and Hailey as escaping a macro-scale social reality by framing their experiences as micro-scale intersubjective experience, and in *Califia* the reader recognizes "herself" (i.e., the addressee) as engaged in the same negotiation between macro and micro as the narrators, rediscovering a revisionist macro-scale history by way of micro-scale investigations.[1]

In each of these recognitions, the texts recapitulate the recent critical and social give-and-take[2] over the idea of a self, a negotiation between demands for theoretical adequacy to plural, socially-produced consciousness, and demands for an ethical adequacy, an account of a self that allows for responsibility and accountability (i.e., adequate to socio-historical realities).[3] Each

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[1] For a series of basic diagrams that clarify the four novels' distinct cognitive forms, see Appendix B: Cumulative Blending Diagrams. A more extended consideration of *Califia* could relate Luesebrink's achievements not only with Linda Hutcheon's "historiographic metafiction," but also with Bolter and Grusin's "remediation," and the debate over web-based "distributed" scholarship sometimes represented in the works of Clay Shirky. *Califia* also includes a pun on its own status, a series of events in which Violet Summerland contributes a vital clue by counting on her fingers—in a button labeled "Digital Memory" (East, Paradise Meeting 3).

[2] I find it telling that English has few integrative terms for the coming-and-going, the mutual contamination, between argued positions. "Oscillation" and "ambivalence" each carry contrary connotations, and "conversation" lacks purposiveness. Even "dialogue" can be misleading for the present purpose, for the demands do not always acknowledge one another's existence, validity, or even legibility. By contrast, the Spanish noun *vaivén*, for example, signifies "coming-and-going" or "give-and-take" in a glib compression of *present tense* verbs, rather than the clumsy English gerunds and infinitives (*el vaivén* compresses *va y viene*, "[it] goes and [it] comes").

[3] I draw here upon the distinction between ethical considerations as basis for moral activity, and moral considerations as the practical activities amenable to evaluation. For further discussion, see for example Butler's variations on the terms (Butler 7, 18-19, 21), and her Levinas-based approach to their subjective accessibility (33-4).

second-order combined-story blend reorients, rather than abolishing, the dilemma the reader faced initially—"how do I read this?"—making the reader responsible for the story-world by virtue of her participation in its production. I have called this participation "bearing witness" so as to distinguish it from activities that might be called "writing" or "authoring."[4] In turn, the blending-model of narrative reading allows description and analysis of this "cognitive form," clarifying the sense of reader-text interactivity by illustrating how textual details encourage the reader to change the continuously-revised story-world blend.

Limitations

In spite of the explanatory power and precision of the blending-model of narrative reading, the present study suffers from three limitations: analytic complexity, empirical legitimacy, and of course, a small sample size. The first is simply a matter of efficiency, and contributes to the third. Blending analyses depict the reader's interaction with the whole narrative, ranging from the micro-scale process that reads textual and graphical elements as narrative discourse to the macro-scale process that integrates disparate narrators' stories into one shared story-world. This range of analysis cannot be avoided, for once a higher-order blend (a combined-story or second-order combined-story blend) has begun, it *is* the story-world, and the reader integrates further textual elements directly into it, until and unless they force drastic revisions that rebuild the underlying "parsing" and "direct story" blends. The vast bulk of exposition involved in such a range of analysis leads me to suggest that blending analyses will be

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Again, too, Adorno's work lurks in the subtext here, particularly in terms of his conception of an ethical system that can be lived. I leave his specific version of historical process and adequacy for future study.

[4] This sense deserves comparison, in particular, to Flynn's sense that Lyotard's theory of memory and trauma demands that the critic or philosopher "bear witness to differends"—differences that do violence by way of mutual incomprehension—"by finding idioms for them" (153).

best employed either a.) in analyzing complex individual texts that seem to "defy" or "undermine" narrative itself, or b.) in elucidating specific kinds of blending process such as instances of an "unreliable narrator" or an "ambiguity" or "incommensurability," where conventional narratological terminology becomes too vague or self-contradictory. In both cases, I envision the blending-model of narrative reading as a supplement, a way of clearly describing how a text's features prompt for a reading process with a specifiable form, paving the way for further interpretation.

The second objection is more difficult to answer, because it touches the very roots of narrative analysis. The problem with studying *story* (rather than textual features) is that its existence is a matter of consensus. Common sense leads us to assert that we perceive (in the world) objects and people, and neurophysiology is beginning to measure the accuracy of such assertions. But mental entities such as "stories" fall into a psychological category less amenable to empirical measurement—as demonstrated in studies of Genette's attempts to speak empirically about narrative pacing and event-compression.[5] Structuralist narratology arose as a means for speaking as empirically as possible about story-form, but it always requires a certain willingness to agree about the objects of analysis. The old philosophical question about perceptual verification still applies to the dilemma of whether different readers can say they read "the same" story, and what that shared assertion might mean (whether it is valid, reliable, useful, and so forth). Cognitive theories—Ricoeur's and Fludernik's, for instance—re-ground the story-level concepts of existents and events in embodied experience of the physical world by way of

[5] Genette's famous attempt to calculate narrative velocity ("duration") by measuring textual space against story-time or reading time (his "pseudotime") appears in *Narrative Discourse* (34-5, 88-109). Ricoeur reconsiders this kind of measurement by setting Genette's account alongside Gunther Müller's distinction between narrative utterance and statement (77, 81-7). Pier reconsiders Genette's categories, relating his "discours" to the Russian formalist *sjuzhet* in terms of temporal order and duration (83).

cognitive machinery[6] that can ostensibly be measured. The trouble is that empirical verification for cognitive machinery—when applied to reading instead of perception; to the life of John Shade, and not a ham sandwich—is difficult to come by. Cognitive blending has yet to receive its blessing, which might incline the skeptical reader (of the present treatise) to doubt whether any *empirical* reader (of the novels) really undertakes precisely these story-blends.

Although in terms of neurobiological verification the jury is still out,[7] the present conception of narrative reading offers further clarity for assertions that narrative understanding is itself founded in embodied experience, and that reading-out a story-world from a text is a matter of integrating unlike conceptions according to the exigencies of habitual practice (entrenched blends such as the narrative frame) and material information (the text itself). Hence, in the present study, my continuous use of "prompt" and its synonyms. I can discuss how the text might encourage somebody with the right conceptual apparatus to imagine existents and events, and I can use textual evidence to predict how such imagination will turn out, but I cannot assert that all readers will imagine the same way—which is perhaps for the best. While it as yet remains (and may always remain) impossible to see precisely what happens in the reading mind, it remains entirely possible to talk about textual elements, and how they seem to (or seem not to) suit paradigms of embodied experience.

What I have provided in this dissertation is not a definitive account of what happens in *any* reader's cognitive reception of the texts analyzed herein. It is, rather, a new model and a set of tools for arguing meaningfully, and with reference to textual evidence, over the potential ways

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[6] See also Eder and Herman for similar efforts.

[7] See for example Fauconnier and Turner's own comments on the subject (F&T 57, Chapter 9). Bache suggests that neurophysiology has yet to confirm their assertions (1619-20), and the recent sessions on blending at the annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Narrative were rife with caveats about such empirical confirmation.

in which reader and text may interact to produce story.[8] Those who would disagree with my analyses need no MRI data; they need only offer textual details, a set of expectations (a narrative frame), and story-world blends that differ enough to alter the entire reading-blending process. It will then be possible to discuss whether or not the resultant system of dynamic blending activity takes adequate account of textual prompts, whether it makes justifiable connections among mental spaces—and so on.

Moving Forward

The third limitation—the small sample-size—results directly from the efficiency problem discussed above. As I have mentioned on occasion throughout the preceding chapters, the present project understands these four novels' narrative form as constituting an artistic and critical practice that is specific to the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century, a practice that tries to use to the fullest advantage the insights of both postmodernist critical theory and its recent critique on contextualist, historicist, or ethical grounds. I have summarized this difference and continuity in terms borrowed from Derrida: if postmodernism wedged a "neither/nor" between an empiricist "either/or," then the authors considered here have attempted to re-envision the dually-negating "neither/nor" as a dually-affirming "both/and," without staging this middle ground as an ironic limit to contemporary thought or cognition.[9] This is an argument that will need a substantial amount of further research to explore fully.

I have conducted the present study as a pilot program, whose primary purpose has been to

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[8] Again, see Eco's conception of a "field of relations" (*Open Work* 19); see also his clarification that, in *Open Work*, he "was studying the dialectics between the rights of texts and the rights of their interpreters" (*Interpretation and Overinterpretation* 23). For further discussion, see Danvers's use of his terminology for the visual arts (112-26) and psychology (187).

[9] In this vein, see Lukacher's comments about future conceptions of time (100).

work out a clear blending-model of narrative reading, to demonstrate the model's utility in describing a story-form I have seldom encountered, and to suggest how this form's accurate description produces unique interpretive conclusions. Future studies will have to reconsider similar texts from the last century and earlier, and determine whether or not they ought to be numbered among the "both/and" texts. My working hypothesis is that such experimental works will, like *Pale Fire*, tend more toward the "neither/nor" model, if not a straightforward ("either/or"-style) coherent story-world. In order to complete such a study, I will need to clarify a blending-model account of heterodiegetic narration, to supplement that which I have here derived for autodiegetic narration. My working hypothesis here is that Fludernik is correct in relating narrative to face-to-face conversation, and that therefore autodiegetic narration, which makes a character of the narrator, is the prototypical narrative case. I would argue that heterodiegetic narration often proceeds through a basic counterfactual blend,[10] insofar as the text prompts the reader to understand its story-world *as though* a narrator were present for the story-world action, even if one is not.

In addition to a greater historical depth of analysis, I also see a need for a greater cultural variety in the sample of texts. I suspect that the present texts have to use such elaborate self-referential and self-contradictory story-forms to attain the "both/and" conclusion because the Eurocentric literary tradition (as embedded in the reader's habitual narrative-reading blends) tends to emphasize certain kinds of story-world coherence and incoherence—namely *psychological* contradictions and incoherence grounded in *empirical* coherence. The integrations that are so hard-won in the present texts would likely come much easier to narratives in cultures where the conceptual oppositions surrounding self, other, and world are not so thoroughly

[10] For more on cognitive blends involving counterfactual elements, see Turner (10, 76) and F&T (Chapter 11).

entrenched as "reality blends."[11] Specifically, South American "magic realism" would likely reward a thorough blending analysis, as would novelistic traditions in India and Africa. "Magic realism," or *la magia de lo real*, has been received (and translated) as a new breed of fantasy in the United States, but in its originating countries it is not so received, primarily because it alludes to, reiterates, and parodies tropes of traditional wisdom that operate according to a logic unfamiliar to U.S. audiences. Likewise, Indian fiction such as the work of Salman Rushdie emerges from cultural traditions with roots in Hindu and Buddhist traditions that, as Danvers notes, produce stories with a "both/and" form more readily than Western texts.[12] Finally, as suggested in the course of Chapter 4, African cosmologies also treat temporality and causality just as differently from Western philosophy, so I expect to find something akin to a "both/and" logic in works that descend from Yoruba, Dahomey, and KiKongo traditional stories.

Prime Benefits

In sum, I see this dissertation as affording distinct benefits for future literary study in the realms of narratology, theories of cognitive conceptual integration, and practical textual interpretation. For narratology, it provides a model of narrative reading that reconsiders story as a dynamic interaction between reader and text, but an interaction whose cognitive form can be meaningfully described and debated. Cognitive theories of narrative have already demonstrated story's origin in pre-linguistic physical experience (Ricoeur), social interactions such as

[11] Fauconnier and Turner emphasize that we live most of our lives "in the blend," i.e., making judgments and conclusions on the basis of the entrenched blends by which we recognize and categorize objects (see F&T 83; for more on blends that involve what is "real" see Turner 137, F&T Chapters 9 and 10).

[12] See Danvers's discussion of the similarities between certain kinds of postmodernist aesthetic practice and Tibetan Madhyamika Buddhism (71). See also Danielewski's intriguing use of some Eastern concepts in *Only Revolutions*, as mentioned in Chapter Three of the present work.

conversation (Labov, Fludernik), and real-world epistemology (Jahn, Herman, Turner). By integrating these advances with traditional narratology, the present study also stands to benefit studies of cognitive blending itself, working toward a way to evade its "ubiquity problem" by distinguishing clearly between kinds of blend, and by grounding the blending process of narrative reading clearly in the mind of the reader. To date, studies of blending in narrative have often placed "the blend" ambiguously in the mind of the author (which seems epistemologically dubious) or the mind of characters (ontologically dubious). The present study follows Todorov's work on story and discourse in suggesting that drastically different analyses will result from a conception of a blending process of *reading* (the object of the present study) and a blending process of *composition*. In addition, the present study also distinguishes between the kind of blending process involved in reading-out a direct-story blend from that involved with creating a combined-story blend. This suggests that not all blends are created equal, and therefore that, although blending may describe activities from perceptual categorization to recognition of metaphors, it is not thereby rendered useless as a category that excludes nothing.[13]

In the realm of textual interpretive practice, this dissertation offers a way to venture beyond conclusions that difficult, self-contradictory texts simply defy the reader's expectations, confront her with paradoxes, or abandon narrative form altogether. The ability to describe how a text encourages cognitive blending activity grounds potential efforts to explain and predict differences in interpretation, to measure unintended consequences or cross-grain readings, and to explore the ramifications of intertextual allusions. Indeed, I see the concatenation of textual "promptings" as a viable way to refine arguments about the "implied author" of any given text,

[13] For further discussion see Fauconnier and Turner (7-8); Bache, who follows Gibbs in asserting the ubiquity problem (1617); and Copland, who begins a rebuttal (146).

or more precisely, what Eco calls the "intentio operis" or "intention of the text."[14] Just as the reader develops a working conceptual hypothesis that the textual element "I" corresponds to some human narrator who takes on a causal role as "source of the discourse," this concept can be nested inside a higher level—an effect illustrated within *Erasure* and Chapter Four as an instance of "causative diasthesis." It is this shadowy agent who stands behind my use of the term "text" as an agent that prompts, as well as my occasional use of the empirical authors' names—but a complete exploration of the "implied author's" history as an analytic term, let alone the cognitive form of a blending-based account of it, would be too protracted to pursue further here.

This dissertation does not provide a rubric for a mechanical blending-analysis that would derive interpretations by a simple application of the four-space blending model. Rather, it provides tools for describing and debating about how readers can interpret texts. I propose the blending-model as a contention about the reader's involvement in story-construction, and hope that future studies will use it to make further contentions about the intentions and potentials of recalcitrant, recursive, contradictory texts.

[14] See *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (25, 65). Cooren's version of "textual agency" (3) is remarkably similar to Eco's concept.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Cognitive Blending Terminology

Since the theory of cognitive conceptual integration, or "blending," introduces so many technical terms, I have grouped these together in the following glossary for easy reference. Most definitions are summarized from Fauconnier and Turner's *The Way We Think*; I have proposed the terms in quotation marks in the course of developing my blending-model of narrative reading. Terms that appear in italics within the definitions are also themselves defined within this Appendix.

Blended Space: The combined mental space that results from the alignment of two input spaces, their integration, and the mental elaboration of that integration (see also *mental spaces*; see Turner 59, F&T 47).

Blending: Also known as Cognitive Conceptual Integration. Fauconnier and Turner include four *mental spaces* in their basic blending diagram, the *inputs*, the *generic space*, and the *blended space*. Blending occurs in three stages: *composition*, *completion*, and *elaboration*.

Cognitive Frame: A schema that has become habitual, and includes a situation that has roles to be filled, and relationships between roles (F&T 40).

"Combined-Story" Blend: A conjectural name for the blending activity that combines two or more stories (*direct-story blends*) to create either a story-world in which both stories seem to exist (or to which both seem to refer), or a single story being told by an evasive or unreliable narrator. It may be further combined in a *second-order combined-story blend*, and may be a *mirror* blend (if the two stories share enough of the same organizing frame),

a *single-scope* blend (if one story is reduced into another), or a *double-scope* blend (if both stories produce an independent story-world to which both stories refer).

Completion Stage: The second stage in the *blending* process. The mind pulls structure and roles from the *inputs* and creates the *blended space*, which may take roles or relations from either input, as well as "variables," entities that fill the roles and take up the relations (Fauconnier and Turner 48).

Composition Stage: The first stage in the *blending* process. The mind aligns the roles and relationships in the inputs to generate the generic space, the commonalities they share (Fauconnier and Turner 42, 48).

"Direct-story" Blend: A conjectural name for the process whereby a reader attains global insight into a text by blending discourse elements with narrative's story-frame, producing "the story" being told. The generic space includes a narrative communicative frame; the inputs include an array of signifying elements being read as narrative discourse, and the array of elements and relations expected for story (the story frame); the blend is a specific story, and may be further combined in a *combined-story blend*. This blend is a *single-scope blend*.

Double-Scope Blend: A network or blend where the two inputs do not share an identical organizing frame, and where each input contributes not only variables (individual elements like "John Shade" in a story), but framing material such as roles and relationships (such as the role for an autodiegetic narrator in a story, which has causal connections to the text) as well (see Fauconnier and Turner 131).

Elaboration Stage: The third stage in the *blending* process. The mind fleshes out the blend,

"treating [blends] as simulations and running them imaginatively according to the principles that have been established for the blend" (F&T 48)—a process that produces emergent structure, cognitive conclusions unavailable in the inputs.

Generic Space: In a *blending* process, it contains the shared schematic structure, the aspects of frame and role common to both inputs (see also *blending*, *mental space*; F&T 41). Not to be confused with notions of "genre," which are better handled by the term *cognitive frame*.

Input Space: One of at least two *mental spaces* to be combined in the *blending* process (see Turner 60; F&T 29).

Mental Spaces: The "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action" (Fauconnier and Turner 102). They generally take the form of *schemas*, situations that take their roles and relationships from physical experience of the world.

Mirror Blend: An integration network (or *blend*) in which the mind lines up two inputs that share the same organizing frame (the same structure of roles and relationships) and integrates them directly in a one-to-one correspondence (Fauconnier and Turner 122-3). What I here call the *"parsing" blend* is a mirror blend that allows a reader to recognize a text as narrative discourse.

"Parsing Blend": A conjectural name for the process whereby a reader recognizes or "sees" a text as narrative discourse, as opposed to other modes of communication. The generic space includes a general communicative frame; the inputs include an array of signifying elements (the text) and the spatiotemporal deixis expected for narrative discourse (the

narrative-discourse frame); the blended space constitutes a specific narrative discourse. This blend is a *mirror blend*.

Schema: A loose networks of relationship; the most basic form is physical. Turner calls them "skeletal patterns that recur in our sensory and motor experience. *Motion along a path, bounded interior, balance,* and *symmetry* are typical image schemas" (Turner 16). Turner and Fauconnier treat schemas as *cognitive frames* (Fauconnier and Turner 40).

"Second-Order Combined-Story" Blend: A conjectural term for the combination of already combined story-levels (of *combined-story blends*). Fauconnier and Turner sometimes call higher-order blends "megablends" (see Fauconnier and Turner 151), but since blends get adopted into other blends so frequently, this term is always relative, and provides too little precision here. A second-order combined-story blend may be a *mirror*, a *single-scope*, or a *double-scope* blend, depending on the organizing frames involved.

Single-Scope Blend: A network (or blend) that "has two input spaces with different organizing frames, one of which is projected to organize the blend. Its defining property is that the organizing frame of the blend is an extension of the organizing frame of one of the inputs but not the other" (Fauconnier and Turner 126). What I call the *"direct-story" blend* is a single-scope blend that produces story from discourse.

Story Blends in *Califia* (see also Figure 53 in Appendix B: Cumulative Blending Diagrams):

- Direct-story blends:
    - A: Augusta relates the experiences of Augusta, Calvin, Kaye, et al.
    - C: Calvin relates the experiences of Calvin, Augusta, Kaye, et al.
    - K: Kaye relates the experiences of Kaye, Augusta, Calvin, et al.

    - In addition, several interpolated texts produce direct-story blends not enumerated by name in the present study.
- Combined-story blends:
    - The Treasure Hunt: the open-ended story of a treasure-hunt that positions the addressee as capable of "finding" treasure. A blend of A, C, K, and others.
    - The Discovery of Loss: the closed story of a treasure-hunt already completed, and also made irrelevant by historical circumstances. A blend of A, C, K, and others.
- Second-order combined-story blends:
    - The Story Hunt: integrates The Treasure Hunt and The Discovery of Loss into a revisionist historical project

Story-Level Blends in *Erasure* (see also Figure 52 in Appendix B: Cumulative Blending Diagrams):

- Direct-story blends:
    - M-Exposes: Monk relates his experiences, thereby exposing racism in his society.
    - M-Exposed: An attempt to relate experiences exposes a series of shifting identity-formations that all involve the name Monk.
- Combined-story blends:
    - M-Exposes: Monk relates his experiences and provides examples of other texts, which help him expose racism. This is an extension of the direct-story blend M-Exposes, including other textual elements within *Erasure*.

    - M-Exposed: The included documents implicate Monk in the very discourses he says he resists, by exposing his shifting identity-formulations. This is an extension of the direct-story blend M-Exposed, including other textual elements within *Erasure*.
- Second-order combined-story blend:
    - M-Initiated: integrates M-Exposes and M-Exposed by seeing Monk's subjective experience as one of initiation through self-exposure and self-recognition according to existing novelistic paradigms.

Story-Level Blends in *Half Life* (see also Figure 50 in Appendix B: Cumulative Blending Diagrams):

- Direct-story blends:
    - Nora (Not) Alone: Nora relates the experiences of Nora and Blanche.
- Combined-story blends:
    - Not Exactly Nora: The narrator relates the experiences of Nora and Blanche, but may indeed be Nora, Blanche, or some indistinct combination of the two. A blend that integrates Nora (Not) Alone with subsequent discourse material. This blend has three potential completions:
        - N vs. B: The narrator is and has been Nora, who relates her struggles with Blanche
        - B vs. N: The narrator is and has been Blanche, who relates her struggles with Nora
        - N/B Alone: Only one of the two heads remains capable of

consciousness, and narrates a struggle with herself

- Second-order combined-story blend:
    - Trauma and Recovery: integrates N vs. B, B vs. N, and N/B Alone as a narration that accomplishes anamnesis and recovery from trauma.

Story-Level Blends in *Only Revolutions* (see also Figure 51 in Appendix B: Cumulative Blending Diagrams):

- Direct-story blends:
    - S on S&H: Sam relates the experiences of Sam and Hailey
    - H on H&S: Hailey relates the experiences of Hailey and Sam
- Combined-story blends:
    - S&H Synchronized: Sam and Hailey travel together and narrate the same events from different subjective perspectives. A blend of S on S&H and H on H&S.
    - S&H Sequential: Sam and Hailey travel in different centuries and narrate different events from different temporal perspectives. A blend of S on S&H and H on H&S according to the chronological references in the chronomosaics.
- Second-order combined-story blend:
    - S&H Escape: integrates S&H Sequential and S&H Synchronized by recognizing Sam and Hailey's narration as an attempt to escape contextual events and constitute their experiences as shared.

Story-Level Blends in *Pale Fire* (see also Figure 49 in Appendix B: Cumulative Blending

Diagrams):

- Direct-story blends:
    - JS on JS: John Shade relates the experiences of John Shade.
    - K on JS: Kinbote relates the experiences of John Shade.
    - K on K: Kinbote (or perhaps Vseslav Botkin) relates the experiences of Kinbote.
    - K on CX: Kinbote relates the experiences of King Charles Xavier II of Zembla.
    - K on G: Kinbote relates the final actions of Jakob Gradus / John Gray.
- Combined-story blends:
    - JS-True: The true story of the experiences of John Shade. A blend of JS on JS and K on JS.
    - K/CX: The story of Kinbote's fantasy-history of himself as King Charles II of Zembla. A blend of K on K and K on CX.
- Second-order combined-story blends:
    - VB1: Reduces the entire novel's contents to the work of Vseslav Botkin.
    - JS1: Reduces the entire novel's contents to the work of John Shade.
    - DNW: Creates a story-world reality to which both John Shade and Charles Kinbote refer.

Vital Relations: Vital relations are connections between roles in mental spaces, "links from cause to effect, links through time and through space, links through change, and links through identity" (Fauconnier and Turner 92), but also including part-whole,

representation, analogy, disanalogy, property, similarity, category, intentionality, and uniqueness (93-101). These can operate within a mental space, as in the causal relationship that connects an autodiegetic narrator to the discourse, or between the mental spaces in the blending process, as in the identity connection that link a narrator-character in one story with a character in another narrator's story.

Appendix B: Cumulative Blending Diagrams

For the sake of easy reference, I provide here cumulative blending diagrams for each of the five major texts considered in this dissertation. Note the multiple possible second-order combined-story blends in *Pale Fire* (Figure 49), versus the integrative second-order blends in the following four novels, and the procession of textual elements in *Half Life* (Figure 50) and *Erasure* (Figure 52). The numbered "Discourse" spaces and the dotted lines are meant to suggest that, at least on a first reading, the reader has to wait until later in the text to begin creating the most complex blends. In *Only Revolutions* (Figure 51) and *Califia* (Figure 53), most of the prompts are already in place from the very beginning. These charts are merely heuristic, at best, for as I argue throughout this dissertation, the dynamic nature of the reading process makes a single "summing up" of this kind wholly inadequate to an accurate representation of the story-world permutations. Because discoveries that result from blends often modify the generic spaces that govern lower-level and higher-level spaces, the form of those blends changes dramatically, and so the best diagrammatic summary of the blends involved is actually the *series* of blending diagrams found in each chapter.

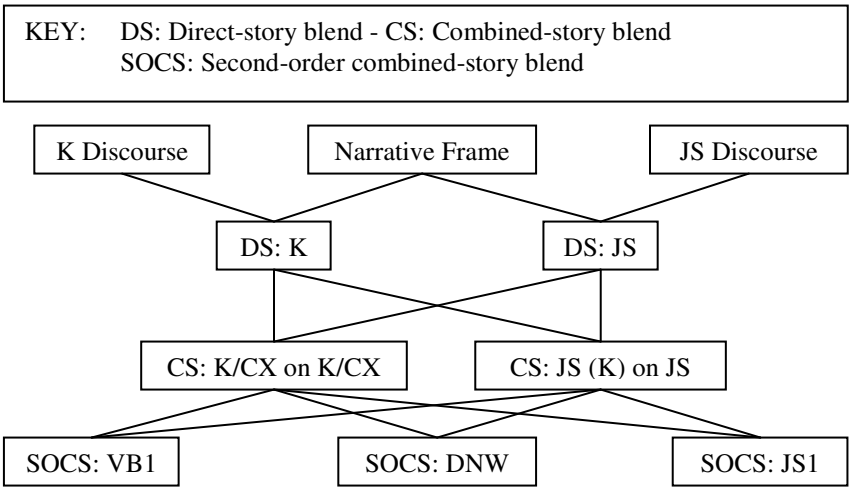

Figure 49. Cumulative blending diagram for *Pale Fire*

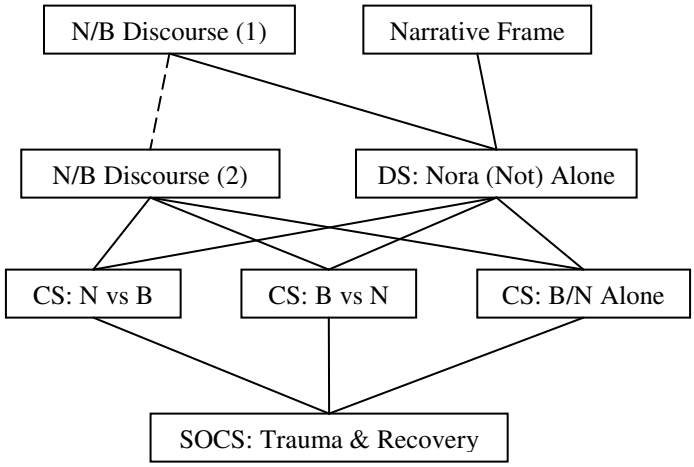

Figure 50. Cumulative blending diagram for *Half Life*

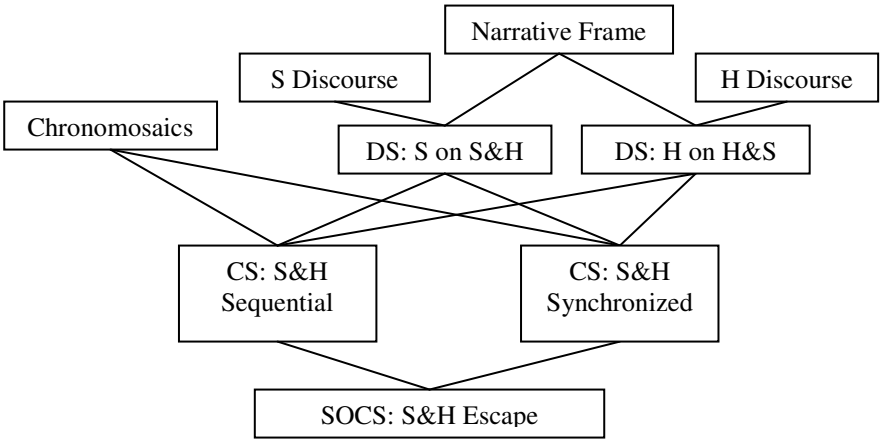

Figure 51. Cumulative blending diagram for *Only Revolutions*

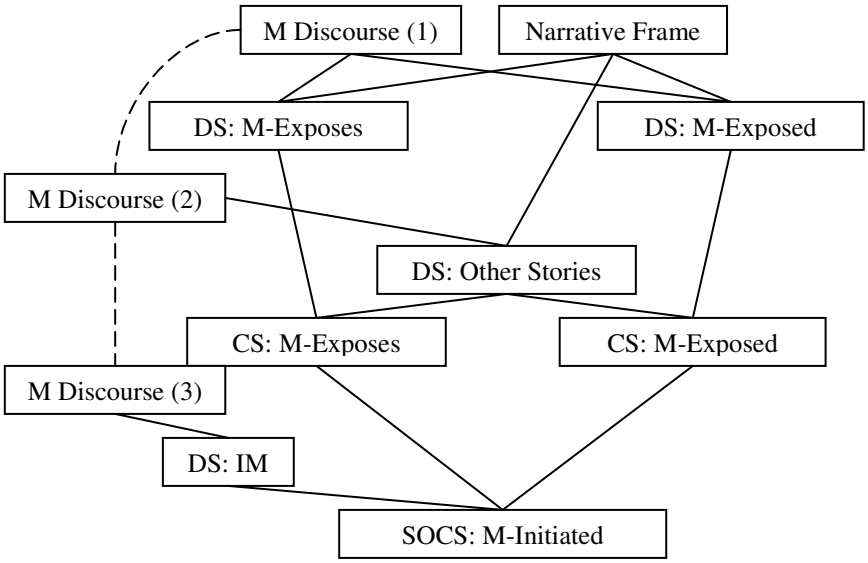

Figure 52. Cumulative blending diagram for *Erasure*

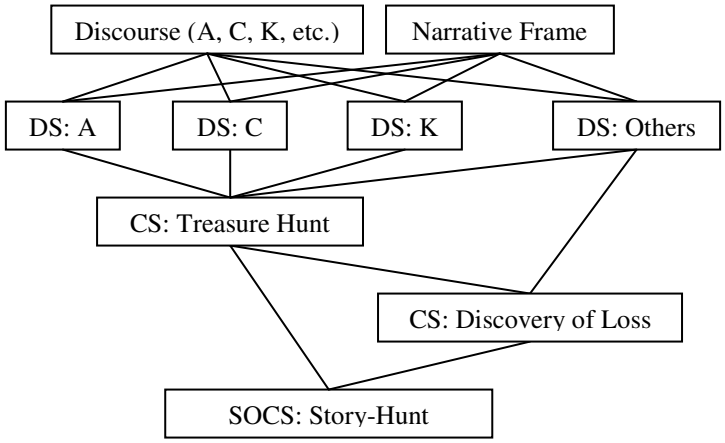

Figure 53. Cumulative blending diagram for *Califia*

Vita

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